

Practices of Looking

THIRD EDITION

AN INTRODUCTION TO VISUAL CULTURE

Marita Sturken | Lisa Cartwright



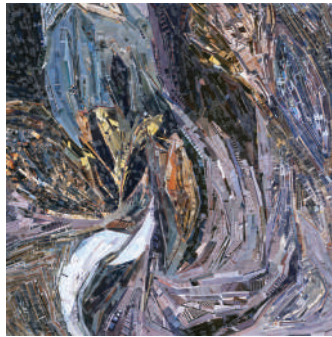
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Third Edition



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acknowledgments

ur heartfelt thanks to the many artists and designers whose work appears in this edition. The book is a tribute to you. We are grateful as well to the many colleagues whose scholarly and critical input has deeply informed this third edition of *Practices of Looking*. Major thanks to those who offered frank advice and suggestions, and especially to the anonymous readers for the press, listed below, who took the time to help us to improve this book based on their experiences teaching with the previous edition. Thanks as well to our own students, who have provided crucial feedback and steered us toward so many urgent and compelling examples, issues, and theories along the way: this book is a tribute to you as well.

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*h*ow do you look? This question is loaded with possible meanings. How you look is, in one sense, how you appear. This is in part about how you construct yourself for others to see, through practices of the self that involve grooming, fashion, and social media. The selfie is a powerful symbol of this era in which not only images but also imaging practices are used as primary modes of expression and communication in everyday life. These days, you may be as likely to make images as you are to view them. How you look to others, and whether and where you appear, has to do with your access to such things as cameras, personal electronic devices and technologies, and social media. It is also contingent upon your place within larger structures of authority and in conventions of belief. Technical literacy as well as nationality, class, religion, age, gender, and sexual identity may impact your right to appear, as well as your ability to make and use images and imaging technologies. Nobody is free to look as they please, not in any context. We all perform within (and against) the conventions of cultural frameworks that include nation, religion, politics, family, school, work, and health. These frameworks inform our taste and self-fashioning, and they give rise to the conventions that shape how we look and where and how we appear. How you look, even when deeply personal, is also always political.

We can see the politics of looking, erasure, and the conventions of looking in this image. The Bahraini protesters pictured in Figure I.1 hold symbolic coffins with photographs of victims of the government's crackdown on the opposition. Some of the photographs appear to be selfies, others family photographs, and still others official portraits, perhaps workplace photographs. The faces of women are left blank out of respect for religious and cultural prohibitions against representing women in images. We might say that they are erased, but we may also note that they do appear in the form of a generic graphic that signifies them through the presence of the hijab.

How you look can also refer to the practices in which you engage to view, understand, appreciate, and make meaning of the world. To look, in this sense, is to use your visual apparatus, which includes your eyes and hands, and also technologies like your glasses, your camera, your computer, and your phone, to engage the world through sight and image. To look in this sense might be to glance, to peer, to stare, to look up, or to look away. You may give little thought to what you see,



FIG. 1.1

Bahraini protesters carry symbolic coffins with pictures of victims of the government crackdown on opposition protests in the Shiite village of Barbar, May 4, 2012

or you may analyze it deeply. What you see is likely to appear differently to others. Whereas some may see the hijab graphic in the Bahraini protest photograph as a sign of women's erasure, others may see it as honoring women's presence as activists in this political context.

Practices of Looking is devoted to a critical understanding and interpretation of the codes, meanings, rights, and limits that make images and looking practices matter in our encounters in the world. Visual theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff tells us that the right to look is not simply about seeing. He emphasizes that looking is an exchange that can establish solidarity or social dominance and which extends from the connection between self and other. Looking can be restricted and controlled—it can be used to manipulate ideas and beliefs, but it can also be used to affirm one's own subjectivity in the face of a political system that controls and regulates looking. In all of these senses, looking is implicated in the dynamics of power, though never in straightforward or simple ways. This book aims to provide an understanding of the specificity of looking practices as social practices and the place of images in systems of social power. We hope that readers will use this book to approach making images and studying the ways in which the visual is negotiated in art practice, in communication and information systems, in journalism, in activism, and in making, doing, and living in nature and the built

environment. *Practices of Looking* supports the development of critical skills that may inform your negotiation of life in a world where looking, images, and imaging practices make a difference. Whether you are a maker of visual things and visual tools, an interpreter and analyst of the visual world, or just someone who is curious about the roles that looking plays in a world rife with screens, devices, images, and displays, you engage with the visual. This book is designed to invite you to think in critical ways about how that engagement unfolds in a world that is increasingly made, or constituted, through visual mediation. Looking is regarded, throughout this book, as a set of practices informed by a range of social arenas beyond art and media per se. We engage in practices of looking, as consumers and producers, in domains that range from the highly personal to the professional and the public, from advertising, news media, television, movies, and video games to social media and blogs. We negotiate the world through a multitude of ways of seeing, but rarely do we stop and ask how we look.

We live in a world in which images proliferate in daily life. Consider photography. Whereas in the 1970s the home camera was taken out for something special—those precious “Kodak moments” since the introduction of phone cameras in 2000, taking photographs has become, for many, a daily habit. Indeed, many hundreds of billions of photographs are taken each year. Each minute, tens of thousands are uploaded to Instagram, and over 200,000 are posted to Facebook. In one hour, more images are shared than were produced in all of the nineteenth century.

Photographs may be personal, but they are also always potentially public. Through art, news, and social media, photographs can be a crucial force in the visual negotiation of politics, the struggle for social justice, and the creation of celebrity. Increasingly, people are resisting oppression through the use of photographs and videos marshaled as a form of witnessing, commentary, and protest, as we can see in the use of photographs on protest placards.

Consider paintings and drawings. How is it different to see an original work in a museum from viewing it at home, in a print copy that hangs on your wall, or online, in a digital reproduction on your computer screen? How does it feel to be in the presence of an original work you have long appreciated through reproductions but never before seen in its original form? What does it mean to have your culture’s original works destroyed or looted in warfare or as a political act of iconoclasm? Meaning, whether in relationship to culture, politics, data, information, identity, or emotion, is generated overwhelmingly through the circulation and exchange of visual images and icons. The idea of the original still holds sway in an era of rampant reproduction. Meaning is also generated through visibility, which we perform in the socially and historically shaped field of exchange in which we negotiate the world through our senses.

That we live in a world in which seeing and visibility predominate is not a natural or random fact. Visibility defines not only the social conditions of the visible but also the workings of power in modern societies. Think about some of the ways



FIG. 1.2

Ken Gonzales-Day, *Nightfall I*, from *Searching for California Hang Trees*, 2007–12 (Lightjet print on aluminum, 36 × 46")

in which seeing operates in everyday dynamics of power. Take the classroom, a space in which many people look at one person, the instructor, who is assumed to have knowledge and power. Consider government buildings and the ways in which their design features lead you to notice some fea-

tures and restrict your access to others, maintaining national defense and government secrets while promoting a sense of their iconic stature. As a pervasive condition of being, visibility engages us, and we engage it, through practices of looking. These practices are learned and habitual, pervasive and fundamental. We engage in them in ways that go well beyond our encounters with images.

We must understand not only what we see, but also what we cannot see, what is made absent from sight. Take this work, *Nightfall I*, by the artist Ken Gonzales-Day. It is a large-scale print depicting the simple lines of a leafless tree framed against a jet black sky. The work is from the series *Searching for California Hang Trees*, in which Gonzales-Day documents trees throughout the state of California on which individuals, many of them Mexican, were hung by lynch mobs. Gonzales-Day invokes absence on a series of levels: the body that was hung from this tree is no longer evident. Its absence gestures to the larger absence in history books of the fact that over 350 lynchings of young Mexican men took place in California, a history Gonzales-Day chronicles in his book *Lynching in the West: 1850–1935* (Duke 2006). The artist uses the “empty” icon of the extant lynching tree to represent the very conditions of making a fact invisible. Whereas in the first image we showed (the Bahraini protest march) those people erased in political killings are made present through images, in this series the empty trees stand in for the people killed. Visibility is about the conditions of negotiation through which something becomes visible and under which it can be erased. How invisibility is “seen” and made meaningful is an important question for visual studies.

Consider as well the visual dynamics of built environments—the ways in which design, whether by choice or through making do with what is at hand, impacts the meaning and use of a place. Consider the cultural conventions through which looking creates connections and establishes power dynamics among people in a given

place, such as a windowless government building surrounded by walls and protected by guards and surveillance cameras. We might ask who has the right to see and who does not, and who is given the opportunity to exercise that right—when, and under what conditions.

Of course, having the physical capacity to see is not a given. But whether you are sighted, blind, or visually impaired, your social world is likely to be organized around an abundance of visual media and looking practices. Its navigation may require adaptive optical devices, such as glasses, or navigational methods that substitute for sight, such as echolocation. The practices we use to navigate and communicate in this heavily visually constituted world are increasingly important components of the ways in which we know, feel, and live as political and cultural beings. We might say that our world is constituted, or made, through forms of visibility, even as it is co-constituted through sound, touch, and smell along with sight. Visual media are rarely only visual; they are usually engaged through sound, embedded with text, and integrated with the physical experience of objects we touch.

Practices of Looking draws together a range of theories about vision and visibility formulated by scholars in visual culture studies, art history, film and media studies, communication, design, and a range of other fields. These theories help us to rethink the history of the visual and better understand its role after the digital turn. These writers, most of them working in or on the cusp of the era of digital media and the Internet, have produced theories devoted to interpreting and analyzing visual culture.

Defining Culture

The study of visual culture derives many of its primary theoretical approaches from cultural studies, an interdisciplinary field that first emerged in the mid-1960s in Great Britain. One of the aims of cultural studies, at its foundation, was to provide viewers, citizens, and consumers with the tools to gain a better understanding of how we are produced as social subjects through the cultural practices that make up our lives, including those involving everyday visual media such as television and film. A shared premise of cultural studies' focus on everyday culture was that the media do not simply reflect opinion, taste, reality, and so on; rather, the media are among the forms through which we are “made” as human subjects—as citizens, as sexual beings, as political beings, and so on.

Culture was famously characterized by the British scholar Raymond Williams as one of the most complex words in the English language. It is an elaborate concept, the meanings and uses of which have changed over time among the many critical theorists who have used it.¹ Culture, Williams proposed in 1958, is fundamentally ordinary.² To understand why this statement was so important, we must recall that prior to the 1960s, the term *culture* was used to describe the “fine” arts

and learned cultures. A “cultured” person engaged in the contemplation of classic works of art, literature, music, and philosophy. In keeping with this view, the nineteenth-century British poet and social critic Matthew Arnold defined culture as the “best which has been thought and said” in the world.³ Culture, in Arnold’s understanding, includes writing, art, and other forms of expression in instances that conform to particular ideals of perfection. If one uses the term this way, a work by Michelangelo or a composition by Mozart would represent the epitome of culture, not because these are works of monetary value but because they would be believed to embody a timeless ideal of aesthetic perfection that transcends class.

The apparent “perfection” of culture, according to the late twentieth-century French sociological theory of Pierre Bourdieu, is in fact the product of training in what counts as (quality) culture. Taste for particular forms of culture is cultivated in people through exposure to and education about aesthetics.⁴ Bourdieu’s emphasis on culture as something acquired through training (enculturation) involved making distinctions not only between works (masterworks and amateur paintings, for example) but also between high and low forms (painting and television, for example). As we explore in Chapter 2, “high versus low” was the traditional way of framing discussions about aesthetic cultures through the first half of the twentieth century, with high culture widely regarded as quality culture and low culture as its debased counterpart. This division has become obsolete with the complex circulations of contemporary cultural flow.

Williams drew on anthropology to propose that we embrace a broader definition of culture as a “whole way of life of a social group or whole society,” meaning a broad range of activities geared toward classifying and communicating symbolically within a society. Popular music, print media, art, and literature are some of the classificatory systems and symbolic means of expression through which humans organize their lives. People make, view, and reuse these media in different ways and in different places. The same can be said of sports, cooking, driving, relationships, and kinship. Williams’s broader, more anthropological definition of culture leads us to notice everyday and pervasive activities, helping us to better understand mass and popular forms of classification, expression, and communication as legitimate and meaningful aspects of culture and not simply as debased or crude forms of expression.

Following from Williams, cultural studies scholars proposed that culture is not so much a set of things (television shows or paintings, for example) as a set of processes or practices through which individuals and groups produce, consume, and make sense of things, including their own identities. Culture is produced through complex networks of making, watching, talking, gesturing, looking, and acting—networks through which meanings are negotiated among members of a society or group. Objects such as images and media texts come into play in this network of exchange as active agents. They draw us to look and to feel or speak in particular ways. The British cultural theorist Stuart Hall stated: “It is the participants in a culture who give meaning to people, objects, and events. . . . It is by our use of things,

and what we say, think and feel about them—how we represent them—that we give them a meaning.”⁵ Following from Hall, we can say that just as we give meaning to objects, so too do the objects we create, gaze on, and use for communication or simply for pleasure give meaning to us. Things are active agents in the dynamic interaction of social networks.

Our use of the term *culture* throughout this book emphasizes this understanding of culture as a fluid and interactive set of processes and practices. Culture is complex and messy, and not a fixed set of ideals, tastes, practices, or aesthetics. Meanings are produced not in the minds of individuals so much as through a process of negotiation among practices within a particular culture. Visual culture is made between individuals and the artifacts, images, technologies, and texts created by themselves and others. Interpretations of the visual, which vie with one another, shape a culture’s worldview. But visual culture, we emphasize, is grounded in multimodal and multisensory cultural practices, and not solely in images and visibility. We study visual culture and visibility in order to grasp their place in broader, multisensory networks of meaning and experience.

The Study of Visual Culture

Visual culture emerged as a field of study in the 1980s, just as images and visual screens were becoming increasingly prevalent in the production of media and modes of information, communication, entertainment, and aesthetics. The study of visual culture takes as one of its basic premises the idea that images from different social realms are interconnected, with art, advertising, science, news media, and entertainment interrelated and cross-influential. Many scholars no longer find viable the traditional divisions in academia through which images in different realms (such as art history, film studies, and communication) have been studied apart from other categories of the visual. The cross-fertilization of categories is the result of historical shifts, technological developments, and changing viewer practices. Through digital technology, media are now merged in unprecedented ways. We may view art, read news media, receive medical records, shop, and watch television and movies on computers. The different industries and types of practice inherent in each form are no longer as discrete as they once were.

Our title *Practices of Looking* gestures to this expanded social field of the visual, emphasizing that to understand the images and imaging technologies with which we engage every day, we must analyze the ways in which practices of looking inform our ways of being in the world. *Practices of Looking*, in its first edition in 1999, took as its distant inspiration John Berger’s 1972 classic *Ways of Seeing*. The book was a model for the examination of images across such disciplinary boundaries as media studies and art history and it was influential in disparate social realms such as art and advertising. The terrain of images and their trajectories, and the theories we use to interpret them, have become significantly more complex since

Berger wrote his book and since our first edition was published. At that time, the information space known then as “World Wide Web” was a fairly recent innovation, and it was difficult to transmit image files online. Digital reproduction was not very advanced, and transmission speed and volume were prohibitive. Technological and cultural changes in place by 2008, when the second edition of *Practices of Looking* was produced, had introduced new modes of image production and circulation. The mix of styles in postmodernism and the increased mixing of different kinds of images across social domains prompted us to further enhance the interdisciplinary approach at the center of this book. At the same time, the restructuring of the media industry through the rise of digital media had blurred many of the boundaries that had previously existed between forms of media. Media convergence had changed the nature of the movies and transformed television and the experience of the audience. In the first edition we proposed that an interdisciplinary approach encompassing art, film, media, and the experience of looking was merited because these domains did not exist in isolation from one another. By the second edition, those social domains were even more interconnected, and digital technology had created increased connections between academic fields of study.

By this third edition, in 2017, cultural meanings and image practices had undergone significant further transformation. Most significant was the rise of social media as a platform for visual culture. The Internet, screen culture, mobile phones, and digital technology dominate modes of communication, political engagement, and cultural production. Even classical and historical works are impacted as digital technologies are increasingly incorporated in preservation and display strategies. This edition has been updated to address changes in the contemporary visual culture landscape in a host of ways. Images and media now circulate more frequently and more quickly than ever before. This is reflected in the proliferation of prosumer and remix cultures, the ubiquitous presence of smartphones with cameras, the popularity of the selfie, the use of social media images to advance social movements as well as to promote brand culture, and the increased intermixing of categories such as science, education, leisure, and consumerism. Consider this example of science “edutainment”: a Lego model of an MRI machine. Created by Ian Moore, a technical support consultant for Lego in the United Kingdom, the toy was designed to help hospital personnel better explain the procedure to children at Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading. Design innovation, biomedical imaging, popular consumer culture, and science education converge, and the story is circulated globally on social media, promoting the Lego brand’s social contributions across all of these categories of culture.

Ways to Use This Book

Practices of Looking is organized into ten chapters divided into subsections that can be used in a modular fashion. While the first two chapters are the most introductory, there is no “right” order in which to read this book. Each chapter is



FIG. 1.3

Lego MRI suite model built by Ian Moore for the Royal Berkshire hospital in Reading, United Kingdom

designed so that it is comprehensible apart from the whole. Each accommodates different emphases and trajectories depending on the focus in a given area of interest or course focus. *Practices of Looking* was written to work in courses on visual culture, design, communication, media studies, and art history. At the same time, this is not a generalist book. We present multiple theories drawn from critical theory, visual studies, media studies, and other fields of study to offer here a range of concepts through which to arrive at new ways of engaging with the visual in the social worlds in which we interact. *Practices of Looking* does not offer a unified methodology for making art or for empirically studying engagement with the visual. Rather, the book offers a varied set of tools for critical thinking, interpretation, and analysis—tools intended to be tried in different combinations to inform how you think about art, design, and visual culture, how meaning is made, and how you make art, media, and things. The book concludes with an extensive glossary of terms used throughout the book. Each chapter ends with a bibliography for further reading.

Chapter 1, “Images, Power, and Politics,” introduces many of the key themes of the book, defining concepts such as representation, ideology, image icons, and photographic truth. It provides an overall introduction to the basic principles of visual semiotics. In this third edition, we have incorporated some important updates to the discussion of photographic meanings and strategies. We discuss body cameras and their use as evidence in police work and law and, here and in other chapters, we expand upon the use of photography in social media and the rise of citizen journalism.

Chapter 2, “Viewers Make Meaning,” focuses on the ways that viewers produce meaning from images and explores the complex dynamics of appropriation,

incorporation, taste, aesthetics, collecting, and display. Prior to the twenty-first century, visual media was primarily something made in industry studios and watched by consumers on television sets and movie screens. Today, we experience most forms of media on the screens of computers and mobile devices, and the consumer is also a producer of images. In this chapter, we look in depth at the role of the consumer who is also a maker and transmitter of visual images.

Chapter 3, "Modernity: Spectatorship, the Gaze, and Power," examines the foundational aspects of modernity and theories of power and spectatorship. This chapter explores the concepts of the modern subject and the gaze in both psychoanalytic theory and theories of power and "the Other" with enhanced attention to contemporary colonialism and postcolonial theory. We have incorporated in this edition a discussion of modernity that emphasizes more pointedly the human subject's gaze relative to negotiations of politics and power globally and across categories of race, gender, and sexuality. Our discussion of art practice addresses recent works by queer and black women artists, and we have included popular media examples such as the television show *Homeland* that help us to foreground public and global contestation about visual meanings and messages concerning Islam, connecting these texts to nineteenth-century colonial painting, twentieth-century journalism, and contemporary neocolonial themes in advertising in order to demonstrate the historical scope of European and American colonial imaginings of Islam.

Chapter 4, "Realism and Perspective: From Renaissance Painting to Digital Media," explores the history of realism in representation and maps out the history of technologies of seeing, emphasizing instruments and techniques used to render perspective from the Renaissance to the present. In the third edition we have updated our discussion of screen cultures and video games in particular, introducing discussion about the conflicts over the politics of gender and sexuality that have raged in the online gaming community.

Chapter 5, "Visual Technologies, Reproduction, and the Copy," considers the history of reproduction practices and the status of the copy, as well as intellectual property law, emphasizing art copyright and brand trademark. This chapter traces reproduction from mechanical reproduction to digital reproduction and 3D modeling. In this edition we have expanded the discussion about computer screens and perspective in relationship to the history of perspective in classical painting, bringing it up to date with the vital expanding literature on computer game culture and virtual worlds.

Chapter 6, "Media in Everyday Life," examines the history of mass media, considering concepts ranging from media and everyday life, mass culture, and the public sphere to media infrastructures, citizen journalism, and global media liveness. Since 2000, there has been much written about media convergence, a concept that refers to the way computers have become the primary platforms for media forms. The film and television industries now overlap with each other and with the computer industry. Boundaries between independent and corporate media cultures

have become less distinct as access to platforms becomes more ubiquitous and social worlds are more readily visible online. In this edition we look at the strategies used to introduce marginal voices across media industries and practices that are increasingly digital and global in their orientation and scope. We also introduce a discussion of social media as a source of news.

Chapter 7, “Brand Culture: The Images and Spaces of Consumption,” focuses on the integration of brand culture in the shifting terrain of social media marketing and consumption. We explore the spaces of consumerism, from nineteenth-century arcades to online shopping, and note changes in marketing and consumer practices ranging from the advent of print advertising to the rise of social media brand culture and the integration of social cause awareness campaigns into marketing strategies. In this edition we enhance our discussion of humanitarian cause marketing alongside new discussions of such important phenomena as brand culture and the share economy. When the first edition of this book was written, consumption and advertising were targets of critique by cultural studies theorists. Since then, marketing and retail have become sites of alternative practice as people with commitments to environmental sustainability, worker rights, local commerce, and green business strategies have entered the fields of manufacture, retail, and marketing. We have included discussion of this important new direction in consumer and brand cultures.

Chapter 8, “Postmodernism: Irony, Parody, and Pastiche,” looks at the central concepts of postmodern theory, the dominance of irony in popular culture, remix culture, postmodern architecture and strategies of simulation, reflexivity, pastiche, and parody. In this edition we have expanded our discussion of postmodern design and architecture as well as our account of simulation, a concept with enhanced significance in a digital world in which representations (copies of the real) have become less vital than the speculative models and prototypes on which the real is imagined and brought into existence.

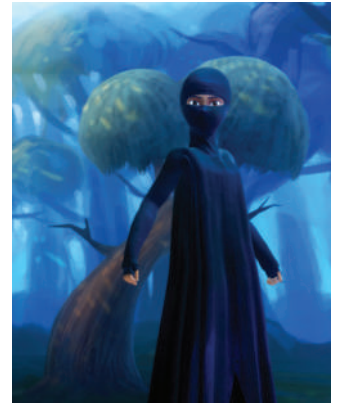
In Chapter 9, “Scientific Looking, Looking at Science,” we consider how the visual and visuality have been deployed in science, and in medicine and forensics in particular. We have expanded our discussion of early representations of the body in medicine to ground updated accounts of biomedical imaging and biometrics in cultures of surveillance.

Chapter 10, “The Global Flow of Visual Culture,” examines the global circulation of all forms of media, concepts of globalization, diasporic and indigenous media, and the globalization of the art world and the museum. As we approach what might be called late postmodernity, this chapter considers theoretical engagements in a postcritical turn that aims to address the economic downturn of 2008; the rise of new global and regional social movements such as the Arab Spring, Occupy, and Black Lives Matter; and the broadening recognition of anthropogenic environmental changes that have altered the face of the planet, global finance, and the world context for art, architecture, television, film, and media cultures.

We encourage you to use this book interactively with other texts and other media in your everyday lives. Go out in the world to museums, political events, and consumer environments and consider the ways that visibility comes into play. Look at how looking practices are enacted around you. Make art and media in ways that are informed by your appropriations of the methods and ideas in this book. Take these ideas and try them out, even in your everyday life. When you go to a clinic for health care, notice how and when looking and visual representation come into play in your treatment. Notice how and when looking is sanctioned, and when it becomes off limits to you. Watch/read the news with full attention to how it is composed, framed, and edited. Watch others watching the news. Try to discern not only what news is shown but also what is *not* shown. Observe who took the pictures posted on news sites, and look at credits to see who owns the rights to them. Studying visual culture is not only about seeing what is put on display. It is also about seeing *how* things are displayed and seeing what we are *not* shown, what we do not see—either because we do not have sight ability, because something is restricted from view, or because we do not have the means for understanding and coming to terms with what is right before our eyes. Consider what is not visible. Use your camera to look at and document the looking practices in which others engage. Use these theories to consider the dynamics of the gaze and the politics of gender and identity, power and authority in the images you take and use, from the selfie to the bystander video to your own artwork. Culture matters, and images matter, in every aspect of our lives. We invite you to see how visual culture and visibility work in relation to your own negotiations of feelings and beliefs, as well as those of others, as we make meanings together in the world today.

Notes

1. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 87; see also Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (New York: Doubleday, 1958).
2. Raymond Williams, "Culture Is Ordinary," in *Resources of Hope* (London: Verso, [1958] 1989), 3–18.
3. Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism* (Oxford: Project Gutenberg, 1869), viii, 7, 15–16, 41, 58, 67, 105, 108–110; see also <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/4212/pg4212-images.html>.
4. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).
5. Stuart Hall, "Introduction," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997), 1–11.



Images, Power, and Politics

every day, we engage in social practices of looking to experience the world. Like other practices, looking involves relationships of power. To willfully look at an image, or not to look, is sometimes a choice. More often, though, we respond to the power of the image and its maker to get us to look, or to force us to look away. To be made to look, to be refused the right to look, and to engage in an exchange of looks all entail engagements with power. A person who is blind or has low vision contends with visual experience and communication no less than a sighted person. Looking can be sanctioned or off limits, easy or difficult, pleasurable or unpleasant, harmless or risky. Conscious and unconscious aspects of looking intersect. We don't always know why we look, or how we feel about what we see. We engage in practices of looking to communicate, influence, maneuver through the world, and make sense of our lives. Even when we opt not to look—when we look away, or when we rely on our other senses to feel and know—our activities are invested with visual meanings. In so many ways, our world is organized around practices of looking.

We live in cultures that are increasingly permeated by visual images and technologies. In these contexts, we invest the visual artifacts and images we create and encounter on a daily basis with significant power. For instance, personal photographs may be invested with the power to conjure feelings about an absent person; political images may be invested with the power to incite belief and action. A single image can serve many purposes, appear in an array of contexts, and mean different things to different people. Images increasingly circulate digitally with great speed across cultural and geographical distances. The power of images is derived both from the shared meanings they generate across locations and the particular meanings they hold in a given place or culture.

This image of women and children looking dramatically draws our attention to practices of looking. The photograph, which does not show us what the women and children see, was taken in the early 1940s by Weegee, a self-taught photographer known for his documentation of urban street crime and everyday spectacle. Weegee, whose real name was Ascher (Arthur) Fellig, tracked crimes reported to the police, sometimes arriving on the scene before the authorities—hence his pen name, a play on the occult board game “Ouija.” In the twenty-first century, we are accustomed to seeing events broadcast live over news sites, Twitter, and other social media. In the 1940s, fast-paced reporting was harder to achieve. In the next photograph, we see Weegee composing a news story out of his car trunk, where he has installed a mobile office with a typewriter and camera equipment. People on the street could enjoy the spectacle of Weegee, the proto social-media journalist, cutting corners on production time to generate news stories and photographs as quickly as possible in the predigital era of print media and photography.

“A woman relative cried . . . but neighborhood dead-end kids enjoyed the show when a small-time racketeer was shot and killed,” states the caption for the photograph *The First Murder* in the 1945 book *Naked New York*.¹ On the facing page of that book is displayed a photograph presumably depicting what the children saw:

the bullet-riddled body of a man in a suit sprawled face down on a bloodstained sidewalk. It is the photograph of the women and children looking, however, and not the gruesome image of the dead racketeer, that has become one of the most iconic of

FIG. 1.1

Weegee (Arthur Fellig), *The First Murder*, 1941 (gelatin silver print)



Weegee's photographs. *The First Murder* calls attention to both the charged expressions of people caught in the act of looking at a crime scene and the capacity of the still camera to capture such ephemeral expressions of emotion—feelings that are deeply reactive and private, and are not performed for the camera or the public eye. The children are caught in an unguarded moment of reaction to what was presumably their first encounter with a murder scene. Their expressions of morbid fascination, in which we see thrill mixed with horror, are matched by our own fascinated looks as we scrutinize their raw expressions immortalized in the photograph.

Images of violence and brutality have been used throughout the history of photography—sometimes as forms of violence themselves, and sometimes to expose and protest injustice. An important example of this is the photographic archive that surrounds the murder of Emmett Till and the ensuing trial. In 1955, Till, a fourteen-year-old boy from Chicago, was kidnapped, tortured, and murdered by two white men in a rural Mississippi town where Till was visiting relatives. Roy Bryant and J. W. Milam abducted Till from his uncle's home, beat him, and forced him to carry a seventy-five-pound cotton-gin fan to the banks of the Tallahatchie River, where they bound the fan to the boy's neck with barbed wire before throwing his maimed body into the river. The murderers alleged that Till, who was black, had flirted with a white woman—Bryant's wife, who was also Milam's sister. The local authorities wanted to bury the mutilated body quickly, but Mamie Till Bradley, Emmett's mother, insisted that her son's body be returned to her in Chicago, where she placed it on view in an open-casket funeral so that the public could bear witness. Recognizing the potential of visual evidence to raise public awareness and to prompt demands for justice, Till's mother made the difficult decision to allow her son's maimed corpse to be photographed by the press so that everyone could see the gruesome evidence of violence exacted upon a child. The funeral, which brought 50,000 mourners, was widely publicized. A graphic photograph of Till's brutalized body was published alongside family photos of Till in *Jet*, an American weekly magazine widely read by African Americans, and this graphic evidence of Jim Crow segregation's brutality was picked up broadly by the press.

Jet was titled to reflect the hectic pace of the postwar world, in which there was no longer much time to read. Photography was well matched to this demand for immediate communication. Ironically, Bryant and Milam were acquitted on the



FIG. 1.2

Weegee (Arthur Fellig) typing in the trunk of his 1938 Chevy, 1942, by unidentified photographer



FIG. 1.3

Body of Emmett Till in glass-sealed casket on view to 50,000 mourners at the Roberts Temple Church of God, Chicago, September 1955. Photo: *Chicago Sun-Times*. In 2016, this casket was put on display in the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, D.C.

hard decision to allow her son's appearance to be used to call people to political action. A personal photograph, both a memento of a loved one and a document of a crime, thus circulated as a work of photojournalism and a political statement, serving as a public call to action.

The politics of looking and witnessing has long been linked to photography and journalism, but access to cameras and to looking has not always been easy or widespread. Whereas in the 1900s the public relied on photojournalists to document events, in the 2000s phone cameras have made this kind of image-based witnessing more ubiquitous. When on July 7, 2005, a series of suicide attacks targeted public transportation in London, killing fifty-two people and injuring more than 770 others,

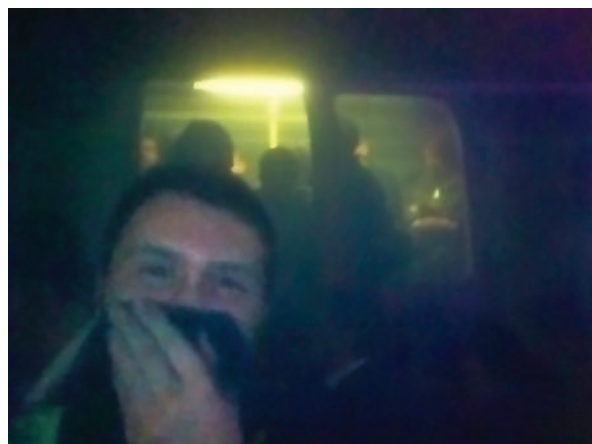
the BBC received 22,000 emails and text messages from people at the scene. Many of those communications included photographs taken at the scene with mobile phone cameras.²

The "Ouija effect" has become ubiquitous, as people find themselves in a position to document and send reports and

images from an ongoing crisis. It is now routine for news outlets to solicit and post this kind of "accidental journalism," "user-generated content," or "citizen journalism" in which the ordinary person assumes the role of author of the latest news. Since 2005, citizen journalism photography has led to a major increase in the number of images published with news stories—a change supported by advances in and availability of image software and mobile technology. The

FIG. 1.4

Eliot Ward, mobile phone image of Adam Stacey taken on Tube train during the July 7, 2005, London bombings



2015 iPhone 6 campaign, with its slogan “shot on iPhone 6,” sells the image quality of mobile phone cameras. This was parodied by a counter-billboard campaign “Also shot on iPhone 6” in San Francisco, reportedly produced by advertising creatives, who wanted to make the point that most images taken on iPhones are pretty banal. The anonymous artists pasted next to the official billboards large-scale posters of over-the-top selfies, photographs more like ones often taken by everyday iPhone users, labeling their parody works “Shot on an iPhone” and branding them with the Apple logo, just like the original ads. The juxtapositions were documented on a Tumblr site that was quickly taken down, presumably because Apple objected on grounds of copyright violation.

Looking in itself can be a form of power. This next mobile-phone photograph, taken on a hilltop outside the Israeli town of Sderot, shows local Israelis who have set up lounge chairs and brought snacks to watch the Israeli military bombard Gaza on the plain below in July of 2014. Allan Sørensen, a Middle East correspondent for a Danish newspaper, uploaded the image to his Twitter account with the ironic caption: “Sderot cinema.” The post was shared more than 10,000 times.³ This image powerfully demonstrates a few of the points introduced here. In it, we see people interpreting the evening ritual of bombing Palestinians as a public spectacle, even as visual entertainment, prior to any use of cameras. The event is treated like a sports match or movie. The documentation of looking is also a means of negotiating power: many people responded to the uploaded photograph with public consternation about the ethics of treating warfare as spectacle sport. It could be argued that Weegee similarly crossed this ethical line by making his reportage public entertainment—rendering his photographs sensational and engaging the public at the crime scene through his performance of “live reporting” as spectacle, which the photograph of his car trunk “office” documents. But whereas Weegee had to develop his photographs and hand them over to the press to circulate on newsprint the next day, Sørensen needed simply to post his image to



FIG. 1.5
“Also shot on iPhone 6”
anonymously produced billboard
ad parody, 2015

FIG. 1.6
Allan Sørensen, Middle East
correspondent at *Berlingske*
newspaper, Denmark, mobile
phone photograph of people
watching bombing of Gaza from
hilltop, posted to Twitter on
July 9, 2014, with line “Sderot
Cinema”



Twitter to achieve mass circulation. We might see the anonymous photograph of Weegee working out of his car trunk as a record of a nascent citizen photojournalism that is now widely practiced. Through photography, readers and consumers of news media now are also producers of news media.

Later in this book we further discuss the idea of the prosumer (the consumer as producer) and the issue of image authorship that this raises. For now, we want to note that the process of representation has become much more pervasive, accessible, and fluid than ever before. We have more images available to us, and we have more means of making images available. More people are taking pictures than ever before, and the boundaries between professional and amateur are becoming blurred. Whereas some would say that photojournalism has become democratized by the pervasive availability of cameras, others would point out that the photojournalism profession has fallen on hard times insofar as journalists must compete with “amateur” mobile-phone photographers who are a volunteer labor force providing free content for the press. Visual representations have become more numerous, more ubiquitous, and easier to make.

It is not always people who take images. The rise of dashboard cameras in the cars of everyday people, the increased use of body-mounted cameras on police, and the proliferation of CCTV (closed circuit television) surveillance cameras in public spaces has led to an increase in “unmanned” camerawork. University of Cincinnati police officer Ray Tensing wore a body camera when he pulled over motorist Samuel DuBose on July 19, 2015, for allegedly driving without a front license plate, and ultimately killed him. The body-cam footage was released simultaneously with a press announcement that Tensing would be indicted on a murder charge. As we discuss further in Chapter 6, the use of dashboard and body cameras has increased the ability of citizens to monitor police activity and assess the accuracy of their statements about how events unfolded. It is difficult to say who is the photographer or producer of these images, which derive their authority and truth value from their status as being taken objectively, without the selective adjustments of a human hand. In the Till and DuBose cases, the camera can be a tool in negotiations of justice and accountability. To understand how images are understood as documenting circumstances requires us to understand how representation works.

Representation

The concept of representation has a specific history and meaning in the study of visual culture, a history that is linked to the production of meaning through symbolic systems. Representation refers to the use of language, marks, and images to create meaning about the world around us. We use words to understand, describe, and define the world as we see it, and we also use markings and symbolism this way. Language systems are structured according to rules and conventions about

how to express and interpret meaning. The representation systems used in painting, drawing, photography, cinema, television, and digital media also involve rules and conventions. These representation systems are in some ways like language systems, which means that they can be analyzed through methods borrowed from linguistics and semiotics that were developed to understand language.

Throughout history, debates about representation have considered whether representations reflect the world as it is, mirroring it back to us through imitation or mimesis, or whether we construct the world and its meaning through representations that are abstract and not mimetic or imitative of physical form. A picture of a cat may share the color of the cat and its general physical shape. The word *cat*, however, bears no physical or visual relationship to the object cat. The combination of letters CAT is somewhat arbitrary in relationship to the object it represents. In this book, we argue that we make meaning of the material world through understanding objects, images, and entities in their specific cultural contexts. This is the case for both abstract and mimetically symbolic systems of demarcation and representation. This process of understanding the meaning of things in context takes place in part through our use of written, gestural, spoken, or visual representations. We “see” the material world only through representations. There is no direct knowledge of the world without representations, whether they are abstract or mimetic. We construct the meaning of things through representing them. Thus, as students of art, visual culture, design, and communication, we need to understand how representation works.

The distinction between representation as a mimetic reflection of the material world and representation as a construction of the material world can be difficult to make. The still life, for instance, has been a favored genre of artists for many centuries. One might surmise that the still life is motivated by the desire to reflect, rather than make meaning of, material objects as they appear in the world. In this still life, painted around 1765 by the French painter Henri-Horace Roland de la Porte, an array of food and drink is carefully painted to reflect what was probably an actual arrangement of these items. De la Porte attended to each minute detail, representing the colors and shapes as they appeared to his eye. The objects, including the fruit, bowl, cup, and wooden tabletop, are rendered with close attention to the ways in which the light hit each object at the time he painted and the ways in which details of each object registered to his eye. The scene seems so lifelike that one imagines one could touch the fruit and eat it. Yet is this image simply a reflection of this particular scene, rendered with skill by the artist as if he had placed a mirror to it? Some of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century still life paintings that we see in museums and collections are straightforwardly representational, while some are deeply symbolic, holding meanings beyond the facts of the scene: fruit on a table. This painting by de la Porte is not merely a mirror image of the display; it also symbolizes peasant life. It invokes a rustic way of living despite the absence of human figures. Elements



FIG. 1.7

Henri-Horace Roland de la Porte,
Still Life, c. 1765 (oil on canvas)

such as food and drink convey philosophical as well as symbolic meanings. The transience of earthly life is one of the possible meanings conveyed by representing simple ripe fruits

and cheeses, which have an ephemeral materiality and were staples of basic, humble meals. The fresh fruits and wildflowers evoke earthy flavors and aromas. Crumbs of cheese and the half-filled carafe conjure the presence of someone who has recently had a simple meal.

We learn the rules and conventions of the systems of representation within a given culture. Many artists have attempted to defy cultural conventions, to push the boundaries or break the rules of various systems of representation. Surrealist artist René Magritte commented on the process of representation in a series of paintings and drawings, famously depicting a picture of a pipe with the line “*Ceci n’est pas une pipe*” (“This is not a pipe”). One could argue, on the one hand, that Magritte is making a joke: of course this is not a real, actual pipe; it is an image of a pipe that he has painted. On the other hand, Magritte’s painting is also pointing reflexively to the relationship among words, images, and things. This is not a pipe itself, the painting suggests, but rather the representation of a pipe in image and word. It contains a label within itself that negates its own function as representation: it is an *image* of a pipe, and therefore representations are never truly consonant with what they profess to be. It is a painting that invites reflection about what representation through word and image is and does.

In this work, *The Two Mysteries* (1966), the famous original 1928 painting is depicted on an easel next to the image of another pipe. Here, we have two pipes—or rather, two paintings of pipes—or a painting of a pipe and a painting of a painting of a pipe, with the same text that reminds us “this is not a pipe.” This might lead us to wonder whether the painted pipe that seems to float in the air is



FIG. 1.8

René Magritte, *Les Deux Mystères* (The Two Mysteries), 1966 (oil on canvas, 65 × 80 cm)

a figment of someone’s imagination or a real prop. French philosopher Michel Foucault elaborates on Magritte’s ideas by exploring these images’ implied commentary about the relationship between words and things and the complex relationship between the drawing, the paintings, their words, and their referent (the pipe). Foucault also raises the question of imagined imagery, insofar as the floating pipe appears like an apparition.⁴ One could not pick up and smoke this pipe; it is a representation, not a material object, and perhaps it is a fantasy. Thus, Magritte points out something so obvious as to render the written message “this is not a pipe” silly, if not absurd. He highlights the act of labeling as something we should think about. He draws our attention to labels and images and their limited ability to represent an object, as well as to the role of fantasy and free association in our representational work. He suggests that this work of representing is also a form of play, insofar as meanings are always pointing toward what is not and are often shifting in their relationship to objects, the real, and fantasy. Magritte asks us to consider how labels and images produce meaning yet cannot fully invoke the experience of the object, which always comes into view in a field of consciousness that includes fantasy and interpretation.

Magritte’s painting is famous. Many artists have referred to and played off of it. The cartoon artist Scott McCloud, in his book *Understanding Comics*, uses Magritte’s *Treachery of Images* to explain the concept of representation in the vocabulary of comics. McCloud notes that the reproduction of the painting in his book is a printed copy of a drawing of a painting of a pipe and follows this with a hilarious series of pictograms of icons such as the American flag, a stop sign, and a smiley face, all drawn with disclaimers attached (this is not America, this is not law, this is not a face). As McCloud makes clear, we are surrounded by images that



FIG. 1.9

Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, 1993

play with representation, unmasking our initial assumptions and inviting us to experience layers of meanings beyond the obvious and literal.

Vision and Visuality

Visual culture is not simply about images. It is also about practices we engage in relative to seeing, and it is about the ways that the world is visually organized in relationship to power. The capacity to look, to be seen, to see, and to participate in the practices of visual culture involves social contestation. Historically, the idea of vision as an all-seeing, god-like power has carried enormous weight. Contemporary surveillance technology extends this ideal of an all-seeing eye, and the belief that to see is to know, suggesting that if only one could see everything, one could understand all. This is a position that we want to challenge, since to see something is not necessarily to understand it. Whereas the term *vision* refers to the physical capacity to see, the concept of *visuality* refers to the ways that vision is shaped through social context and interaction. The art historian Hal Foster refers to this difference in his discussion of sight as “a social fact.” The difference between vision, as the physical act of seeing, and *visuality* contains, Foster writes, “many differences” among how we see, how we are able, allowed, and made to see, and how we “see this seeing or the unseen therein.”⁵ *Visuality* includes not only social codes about what can be seen and who is able and permitted to look, but also the construction of built environments in relation to these looking practices. Consider the placement of windows and walls, built structures that organize our looking practices. *Visuality* is a term that calls our attention to how the visual is caught up in power relations that involve the structure of the visual field as well as the politics of the image.

Visual culture scholar Nicholas Mirzoeff considers *visuality* in depth. He asks us to consider how power (that of the tyrant, the military leader, the occupying army) is enacted in ways that privilege the visual. He charts the role of *visuality* through the histories of modernity and colonialism, describing the U.S. eighteenth- and nineteenth-century slave plantation as an example of a site where vision was

used to exercise command and control, in this case through the surveillance of the slave by the “overseer,” a figure whose very title shows how vision is tied to the exercise of power. Mirzoeff links this mode of visibility to the contemporary visual command and control systems used in modern warfare.⁶

In an article published in *Harper’s New Monthly* magazine in 1853, we read that a Louisiana plantation overseer watches over slaves harvesting sugar cane from a horse. He is elevated to enhance his ability to keep the workers in view while also symbolically placing him above them.

We see through this example how visibility is in part about the systems of power through which authority is enacted and enforced practically and symbolically. Whereas the overseer looks down

at his charges from above, the slaves must keep their eyes to the ground in deference to his authority and in attentive focus on the labor that they must perform. The whip resting on the carter’s shoulder in the illustration is a threat kept in full view. Any slave who glances up at the overseer will be reminded to put their head down and work harder and faster out of fear.

By examining social structures of visibility as they are documented in an image such as this one, we can see how power is enacted in distributed and complex ways through visual means. We see in the Louisiana sugar plantation scene how the right and power to look can be a privilege granted to those in authority to maintain a status quo. But examination of social structures may also reveal how power can be resisted in visual terms, as we saw in the case of the “Also Shot on iPhone” parody campaign. We can think of this as a “countervisual” practice. Throughout this book, we examine many examples in which images and imaging practices are used to intervene in violence, inequality, and social injustice. According to Mirzoeff, countervisuality is about the struggle for “the right to look,” which is as much about a claim to autonomy as it is about a right to see, look, and challenge the power of visibility.⁷

We can see this relationship of looking and power at work in one of the most visually fraught aspects of the twenty-first-century “war on terror,” specifically the drone wars centered on the Middle East. In this context, the U.S. government has been using drone technology to watch, monitor, and fire missiles at people on the ground from unmanned aerial vehicles, armed drones equipped with live cameras. Operators in distant command centers watch the images taken by drones and make decisions, far from the field of action, about where and whether to kill.



FIG. 1.10

Harvesting the Sugar Cane, 1853,
engraving by J. W. Orr



FIG. 1.11

Saks Afridi, Ali Rez, Akash Goel, Insiya Syed, JR, Assam Khalid, Jamil Akhtar, and Noor Behram, #NotABugSplat, 2014

The distanced and dehumanizing perspective offered by the drone is a key factor in the high rate of civilian drone casualties. Drones have been the target of intense criticism and civilian acts of countervisuality. In one instance, an artist collective printed out an enormous print from a photograph

by Noor Behram, a photojournalist then based in North Waziristan. The photograph is reported to depict the face of a Pakistani child, name and current location unknown, whose family members were killed in a drone strike. The huge blow-up of the child's image was laid out across a field in the Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa region of Pakistan, a location regularly targeted by drones.

Calling their project #notabugsplat, in reference to the crude military slang that refers to those killed by drones as “bug splats,” the collective drew attention to the inhumane visual economy of the drone wars by making the “target” a civilian child whose huge eyes look straight back at the drone camera.⁸ The project was intended to make visible to drone operators the human life they are destroying through remote and indirect means. But the image has also been disseminated on the web and in social media to call attention more widely to the injustice of drone warfare. The child's face has become a graphic, larger-than-life icon of innocence and resistance, an image intended to humanize those hundreds of civilians who have been anonymously killed by drones each year. By using scale to render the child visible, the project also points to the dehumanizing effect of a distanced point of view, a standpoint from which the drone operator sees people as nothing more than dots on a screen.

The Myth of Photographic Truth

Photography plays a very particular role in visual culture, beginning with its inception as an analog medium in the nineteenth century and continuing through its contemporary status as a digital medium that circulates through online networks. Throughout its history, photography has been associated with realism, even though the creation of an image through a camera lens has always involved some degree of subjective choice (about such things as selection of subject, framing, and

lighting, for example). Some types of image recording seem to take place without human intervention, as we have seen in the example of dashboard cameras, CCTV surveillance, and drone videos. In these cases, aesthetic choices such as focus and framing are made to seem chosen by the camera itself, insofar as they are part of the “decision-making” black-boxed into the apparatus. Yet the designers and programmers of these cameras have made decisions about their operation based on social norms and standards. This imputing of human sensibility into the system is no less powerful than the imputing of human sensibility into a personal video or a selfie.

Photography has long been bound up with ideas about objective seeing, and about impartial, unbiased, and factual representational strategies. The camera is a machine, and many people associate machines with objective and nonhuman vision. All cameras and camera-generated images, be they still photographs or video, electronic or digital, bear the cultural legacy of still photography, which historically has been regarded as a more objective, mechanical (machine-based) practice than, say, painting or drawing, which are linked to the more subjective work of the hand.

The traditional form of photography, the technique in which light rays reflecting off objects pass through a lens and register an imprint on a medium such as silver halide film (or, in the case of digital photography, a digital chip), was developed in Europe around 1839, when positivism held sway. Positivism is a philosophical theory that holds verifiable scientific knowledge about natural phenomena to be the authentic source of truths about the world. In positivist thought, the individual actions of the scientist came to be viewed as a liability in the process of performing and reproducing experiments to verify facts, as it was thought that the scientist’s own subjective actions might skew the experiment’s objectivity. In a positivist outlook, machines are regarded as more reliable than unaided human sensory perception or the hand of the artist in the production of empirical evidence about what is real and true. Photography seemed to suit the positivist way of thinking because it is a method of producing representations through a mechanical recording device rather than relying solely on the scientist’s subjective eye and hand (using pencil to sketch a view on paper, for example). In the historical context of positivism, the photographic camera was understood to be a useful scientific tool, an objective mechanical instrument that could register reality more accurately than the fallible human eye and hand.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, there have been many arguments for and against the idea that photographs are objective renderings of the real world, providing unbiased truth. Photographs have been used to prove that someone was alive at a particular time and place in history. For instance, after the Holocaust, some survivors sent photographs to family members from whom they had long been separated as an affirmation that they were alive. When a photograph is introduced as documentary evidence in a courtroom, it is often presented as if it were incontrovertible proof that an event took place in a particular way. As such, it is perceived to speak



FIG. 1.12

Timothy O'Sullivan, *Gettysburg, Pa. Dead Confederate Soldier in the Devil's Den*, July 1863 (print from glass, wet collodion negative)

the truth in a direct way. At the same time, the truth value of photography has been the focus of skepticism and debate in courtrooms as well as in other contexts, as images can be differently interpreted, and may reasonably support different and even contradictory “truths.”

That is why we propose that photographic truth is a myth. The contestation of truth in photographs came into question

with special urgency with the emergence of late twentieth-century digital imaging technology. One of the main debates about photographic realism during the early digital era concerned the question of manipulating images. Programs like Photoshop (released in 1990) allow the everyday consumer to alter images easily, making it possible for most photographer-users to fabricate reality through image manipulation. Yet, this is not just a digital issue. Analog photographs have always been subject to alteration and trickery; from the very early days of photography they have been altered to manipulate truth and history.

A widely cited example of the early “faking” of photographic truth is the case of the alleged documentation of a slain Civil War rebel sharpshooter published in Alexander Gardner’s 1865 *Photographic Sketchbook of the War* (the photograph is attributed to Gardner’s assistant Timothy O’Sullivan). The Civil War was one of the first wars to be documented by the photographic camera. Gardner presented the photograph as a scene he encountered. It was later suspected that in fact the gun at the sharpshooter’s side was Gardner’s own, which he apparently placed there for dramatic effect after dragging the soldier’s corpse into the setting that he labeled “the Devil’s den,” propping up the dead man’s face to make its features visible to the camera. William J. Mitchell and other visual culture scholars extensively analyzed the circumstances of this photograph in the 1990s, when digital imaging and image manipulation software made the question of photographic truth loom large. In journalism, the truth claims surrounding an image can make or break the integrity of a journalist, a news story, or a news outlet. Mitchell discusses a 1989 case in which U.S. Navy fighters shot down two Libyan fighter planes.

Libya denounced the action, calling an emergency session of the United Nations (UN) Security Council. When Libya's UN ambassador held that the downed planes were unarmed, a U.S. official challenged the assertion, noting "we have the pictures to prove they were not unarmed" and adding "the Libyan ambassador to the UN is a liar." United States personnel exhibited blurry images that were said to show missiles, demanding of the Libyan representatives: "Do you think this is a bouquet of roses?" The Libyans responded by accusing the United States of doctoring the photographs, fabricating evidence and creating the story "in the Hollywood manner."⁹

That digital images can be manipulated with great ease confounds the association of photography with the documentation of truth. At the same time, the proliferation of proven-false images in the news media and on social media has produced a much more skeptical viewing public. In 2014, Dutch graphic designer Zilla van den Born explored this tension between the truth value of the image and its capacity for manipulation when as a school project she spent five weeks on a "vacation" in Asia, during which she was in fact at home using Photoshop to create and post vacation photos. Inserting herself into typical tourist scenes, group shots, and beach scenes in photographs she shared on social media, Skyping with fake backgrounds, and sending fake postcards, van den Born created a photographic portfolio of her travel adventures without ever leaving her apartment. Here she poses herself on a beach in a typical tourist scene. After the "trip" was over, van den Born let her family and friends in on the secret, titling her project *Sjezus zeg, Zilla* ("Oh God, Zilla"). "My goal was to prove how common and easy it is to distort reality," she states. "I did this to show people that we filter and manipulate what we show on social media."¹⁰

It is a paradox of photography that although we know that images can be ambiguous and are easily altered (as van den Born's project shows), much of photography's power still lies in the shared belief that photographs are, or should be, truthful records of events. The increasing prevalence of documenting the documenter, which we saw in the Weegee car trunk photograph, reaffirms photography's provenance and truth claims. The interweaving into visual culture of tracking programs that document our travel history and activities on our Facebook pages and in our mobile phone archives also helps to uphold, surveil, and affirm a culture of photographic truth and objectivity. Seeing that someone's Facebook settings have led the program to tag their photograph as having been taken in a given city on a given date lends veracity to the photograph, confirming from a source other than the

FIG. 1.13

Photograph from *Oh God, Zilla*, Zilla van den Born, 2014





FIG. 1.14
Robert Frank, *Trolley—New Orleans*, 1955 (gelatin silver print)

photographer that the circumstances were not faked. Our awareness of the subjective nature of imaging is in constant tension with the legacy of objectivity that clings to the cameras and software that together produce images and data about us and our world.

French theorist Roland Barthes uses the term *studium* to describe this truth function of the photograph. The order of the *studium* also refers to the photograph's ability to invoke a distanced appreciation of what the image holds. Yet photographs are also objects with subjective, emotional value and meaning. They can channel feelings and affect in ways that often seem magical, or at least highly personal and interiorized. Barthes coined the term *punctum*, a Greek word for trauma, to characterize the affective element of those photographs that pierce one's heart with feeling. Photography is thus paradoxical: the same photograph can be an emotional object (conveying its sharp and immediate *punctum*), yet it can also serve as measured documentary evidence of facts (through the more distanced *studium* by which the image invites us to regard what it shows). Photographic meaning derives precisely from this paradoxical combination of magical and objective qualities. Artist and theorist Allan Sekula proposed this back in the predigital 1980s: "photographs achieve semantic status as fetish objects *and* as documents. The photograph has, depending on its context, a power that is primarily affective and a power that is primarily informative. Both powers support the mythical truth-value of the photograph."¹¹ The images created by cameras can be simultaneously informative and expressive.

This 1955 photograph of passengers on a segregated trolley car reflects this paradox. It was taken by Robert Frank in New Orleans while traveling around the United States between 1955 and 1957, funded by two Guggenheim fellowships awarded to him to document American life. Eighty-three photographs selected from 687 rolls of film (more than 20,000 photographs) were published in *The Americans*,

a photographic essay with an introduction by the Beat poet Jack Kerouac.¹² In this photograph, *Trolley—New Orleans*, we see individual passengers: a white man and a white woman are seated near the front, a white boy and girl occupy the middle seat, and a black man and a black woman sit further back in the trolley car. As factual evidence of the past, the image records a particular moment in the racially segregated American South of the 1950s when blacks were required by law to sit in the rear on public transportation, leaving the front seats for white passengers. Yet, at the same time, this photograph does more than document these particular facts about racial hierarchy that are made so clear in what was a mundane, everyday arrangement of people. For some viewers, this image is moving insofar as it captures a fleeting moment in a culture on the precipice of momentous change, evoking powerful emotions about America's racial divide. The picture was taken just as laws, policies, and social mores concerning segregation began to undergo radical changes in response to civil rights activism. In Frank's photograph, the passengers' faces look outward with different expressions, appearing to wait not only for their destination but also for the larger social changes soon to come that would make the organization of people in this trolley no longer fall quite this way. It is as if the trolley itself represents the passage of history, and the expressive faces of each passenger frozen in a fleeting moment of transit foreshadow the ways in which all Americans will confront the history that will ensue. We can thus read the image as a kind of allegory, an instance from this historical moment before dramatic changes in the American racial landscape. This photograph is thus valuable both as an empirical documentary image of what has been and as an expressive, symbolic vehicle conveying social transformation.

Myth, Connotation, and the Meaning of Images

In *Trolley—New Orleans*, as in all images, we can discern multiple levels of meaning. Here, the interpretive analytic system of semiotics can help us to understand how meaning is generated. Barthes uses the terms *denotative* and *connotative* to describe different kinds and levels of meaning produced at the same time and for the same viewer in the same photograph. An image can denote certain apparent truths, providing documentary evidence of objective circumstances. The denotative meaning of the image refers to its literal, explicit meaning. The same photograph may connote more culturally specific associations and meanings. Connotative meanings are informed by the cultural and historical contexts of the image and its viewers' lived, felt knowledge of those circumstances—all that the image means to them personally and socially. As we noted earlier, the Robert Frank photograph denotes a group of passengers on a trolley. Yet, its meaning is broader than this simple description. This image connotes a collective journey of life and race relations in the American South in the 1950s. A viewer's cultural and historical knowledge that 1955 is the same year as the Montgomery bus boycotts and that the photograph was taken shortly after the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* desegregation ruling contributes to the photograph's connotative messages, bringing in

the cultural connotations of the trolley as an emblem of social change. Yet a viewer would have to have specific historical knowledge to recognize the trolley image as connotative of a particular historical journey. The dividing line between what an image denotes and what it connotes can be ambiguous, and connotative meanings can change over time and with shifts in social context. All meanings and messages are culturally informed—there is no such thing as a purely denotative image. The two concepts, denotation and connotation, can be useful, however, because they help us to think about the ways in which images function both narrowly to signify literal, denoted meanings and expansively to connote culturally and contextually specific meanings.

Connotation is a primary means through which images convey values. Barthes uses the term *myth* to refer to the cultural values and beliefs that are expressed through connotation.¹³ In this use of the term, myth refers to how images work ideologically (a concept we discuss in the next section). For Barthes, myth is the hidden set of rules and conventions through which meanings, which are specific to certain groups, are made to seem natural, universal, and given for a whole society. Myth allows the connotative meaning of a particular thing or image to appear as denotative (that is, literal or natural). To demonstrate this concept, Barthes interprets this 1955 cover of *Paris Match*, a popular magazine. At this time, France was fighting to retain its colonial power in Algeria, after having promised to grant its independence.

The cover photograph is a close-up on the face of an African boy in a French military uniform. He is saluting. Its caption reads: “The nights of the army. Little Diouf has come from Ouagadougou [now Burkina Faso] with his comrades, children reared

by the A.O.F. [French West African] army to open the fantastic spectacle that the French Army presents this week at the Palais des Sports.”¹⁴ The image, Barthes proposes, does not simply present a boy saluting. It engages in and amplifies a larger myth

about the universal greatness of French nationalism and colonial imperialism. The boy’s eyes are uplifted, suggesting he is saluting a French flag flying above. This, Barthes notes, is the basic meaning of the picture. But also connoted is the idea “that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors.”¹⁵ This connoted message, Barthes proposes, is targeted at a French reader, in whom the photograph will foster the feeling that French imperialism and paternalism in Africa are natural, given conditions and not the outcomes of contestation and historical power struggles.

FIG. 1.15

Paris Match, no. 326, June 25–
July 2, 1955



Image codes change meaning in different contexts. For instance, the representation of smiles has meant many things throughout history. The *Mona Lisa*, for example, is famous in part for Leonardo da Vinci's rendering of the model's smile, which has been widely described as enigmatic, as if the model were hiding a secret. The "smiley face" that emerged in the 1960s has largely been understood as a symbol of happiness. This symbol, which proliferated on buttons and T-shirts in the late twentieth century, also inspired the common emoticon practice that first appeared in the use of punctuation in email to signify a smile :-)) and then became the basis for the smiley face emoticons available as cell phone fonts. 😊 Yet what a smile means depends on context. Is the little boy in *The First Murder* smiling or grimacing? How does the context, which we learn from the related photographs and from the written history of Weegee's practice, help us to determine the meaning of the boy's expression?

Chinese artist Yue Minjun has created paintings evoking "symbolic smiles," making reference to the images and sculptures of laughing Buddha and ironically commenting on the smile as a mask. The smiles in Yue's paintings seem to rise from anxiety, stretched across faces in painful caricature, connoting the irony, folly, and artificial sincerity of everyday life. We can infer these connotations from his painting *Butterfly*, with its exaggerated smiles, distorted faces, horned heads, and strange and naked red bodies, which are all juxtaposed with colorful butterflies, suggesting the famous "butterfly dream" described in a poem about transformation by the Taoist philosopher Zhuang Zhou in which a man's passing dream of being a happy butterfly is confused with reality. We can also learn more about those connotations by finding out about the cultural meanings of the smile in China and about the artist himself, whose work is part of the Chinese art movement of cynical realism, as well as by consulting sources on both modern and traditional China, Chinese painting, and the legacies of the laughing Buddha and Zhuang Zhou's butterfly poem. Whereas the Buddha is laughing in contentment, Yue's figures seem to be smiling in anxiety or even agony. These are very different smiles from the generic smiley-face grin or the enigmatic, barely turned-up lips of the *Mona Lisa*.



FIG. 1.16

Yue Minjun, *Butterfly*, 2007 (oil on canvas, 100 × 80 cm)

FIG. 1.17

Smiling Buddha on rocks with a sack and rosary, eighteenth-century Qing dynasty porcelain figure

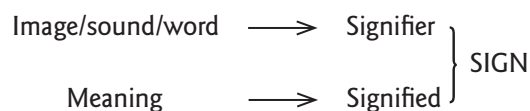


Semiotics and Signs

Our discussion of the layers of meaning in images and the differing meaning of smiles draws from semiotics. Every time we interpret an image (to understand what it signifies), whether consciously or not, we are using the tools of semiotics. The principles of semiotics were formulated by the American scientist and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce in the late nineteenth century and the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in the early twentieth century. Both proposed important linguistic theories that were adapted in the mid-twentieth century for use in image analysis. Saussure's writing, however, has had the most influence on the theories of structuralism that inform the ways of analyzing visual culture discussed in this book. Language, according to Saussure, is like a game of chess. It depends on conventions and codes for its meanings. At the same time, Saussure argued, the relationship between words (or the sound of words when spoken) and things in the world is arbitrary and relative, not fixed. For example, the words *dog* in English, *chien* in French, and *Hund* in German all refer to the same kind of animal; hence, the relationship between the words and the animal itself is dictated by language conventions rather than by some natural connection. Meanings change according to context and to language rules.

Charles Sanders Peirce (whose name is pronounced “purse”) introduced the idea of a science of signs shortly before Saussure. Peirce believed that language and thought are processes of sign interpretation. For Peirce, meaning resides not in our initial perception of a sign or representation but in our interpretation of the perception and subsequent action based on that perception. For example, we perceive an octagonal red sign with the letters STOP inscribed. The meaning lies in our interpretation of the sign and subsequent action (we stop).

There have been many revisions to semiotics, but it nonetheless remains an important method of visual analysis. We choose in this book to use Barthes's and Saussure's model of semiotics because it offers a clear and direct way to understand the relationship between visual representations and meaning. In Barthes's model, in addition to the earlier-discussed denotative and connotative levels of meaning, there is the *sign*, which is composed of the *signifier*—a sound, written word, or image—and the *signified*, which is the concept evoked by that word or image. In the familiar smiley face icon, the smile is the signifier, and happiness is the signified. In the Yue painting, the smile is the signifier, and anxiety is the signified. The image (or word) and its meaning together (the signifier and signified together) form the sign.



For Saussure, the *signifier* is the entity that represents, and the *sign* is the combination of the signifier and what it means. As we have seen with these two different images of smiles, an image or word can have many meanings and constitute many signs in

Saussure's use of that term. The production of a sign is dependent on social, historical, and cultural context. It is also dependent on the context in which the image is presented (in a museum gallery or a magazine, for instance) and on the viewers who interpret it. We live in a world of signs, and it is our interpretive labor that makes the signifier–signified relationship fluid and active in the production of signs and meaning.

Our interpretation of images depends on historical context and our cultural knowledge—the conventions the images use or play off of, the other images they refer to, and the familiar figures and symbols they include. As conventions, signs can be a kind of shorthand language for viewers, and we are often incited to feel that the relationship between a signifier and signified is natural. For instance, we are so accustomed to identifying a rose with the concept of romantic love and a dove with peace that it is difficult to recognize that their relationship is constructed and culturally specific rather than natural. The very fact that the sign is divided into a signifier and a signified allows us to see that images can convey many different meanings.

Another way to look at this is to see that images' meanings are produced according to social and aesthetic conventions and codes. Conventions are like road signs: we must learn their codes for them to make sense, and the codes we learn become second nature. Company logos operate according to this principle of instant recognition, counting on the fact that the denotative meaning (the swoosh equals Nike) will slide into connotative meanings (the swoosh means quality, coolness) that will enhance the brand's value. We decode images by interpreting clues pointing to intended, unintended, and even merely suggested meanings. These clues may be formal elements such as color, shading, tone, contrast, composition, depth, perspective, and style of address. Even seemingly neutral elements such as tone and color can take on cultural meanings. We also interpret images according to their sociohistorical contexts. For example, we may consider when and where the image was made or the social context in which it is presented. An image appearing as a work of art in a museum takes on quite a different meaning when it is reproduced in an advertisement. We are trained to read for cultural codes signifying gendered, racial, or class-specific meanings.

The creation of meaning in any given image is thus derived from many different factors, both within and in the context of the image. This 2008 ad from the World Wildlife Fund illustrates how an image's meaning is often derived from a

FIG. 1.18

World Wildlife Fund ad, TBWA
Paris, 2008



combination of signs. Here, the image of trees in the shape of a lung constructs a message about deforestation that combines several signs to create a visual impact. The lush, green quality of the meadows and trees signifies aliveness, fertility, and life, and the shape of the trees will be read by most viewers as evoking the shape of the human lungs. The combination of these signs, forest as life and forest as lungs, makes a connection between the trees and the capacity of the planet to breathe. Yet, the message of the image is derived from the disturbingly brown section of the “lung” of trees on the right, which depict deforestation and, as a consequence, a loss of the carbon dioxide–reducing trees that keep the atmosphere at an equilibrium. A disease or cancer of the earth is suggested: the earth will increasingly have trouble breathing. Importantly, the ad does this through visual codes, rather than the use of text. It contains only a short tagline, “Before it’s too late,” but the image itself has already conveyed the sense of time running out, since, by implication, the brown area of the forest lung will overtake the healthy green sections.

Our interpretation of this image as one of interlocking signs uses semiotics to describe an interpretative process that we use every day. We use many tools to interpret images and we often use these tools automatically. As such, semiotics names the kind of image interpretation that we do all the time without thinking too much about it. In images, meaning is often derived through the combination of text and image. This is particularly the case in ads and political posters that direct the viewer’s interpretation to a particular meaning through a double take—the image first looks a certain way and then changes meaning with the addition of the text.

We can see this at work in this anti-smoking ad that plays off the symbols of the Marlboro cigarette ads. Marlboro advertisements are known for their equation of the brand with masculinity: Marlboro (signifier) + masculinity (signified) = Marlboro as masculinity (sign). The cowboy is featured on horseback or just

FIG. 1.19

Anti-smoking ad for the California Health Department, Asher and Partners, 1997



relaxing with a smoke, surrounded by natural beauty evocative of the unspoiled American West. These advertisements connote rugged individualism and life on the American frontier, when men were “real” men. The Marlboro Man embodies a romantic ideal of freedom that contrasts with the more confined lives of most everyday working people. It is testimony to the power of these ads to create the sign of Marlboro as masculinity (and the Marlboro Man as connoting a lost ideal of masculinity) that many contemporary Marlboro ads dispense with the cowboy altogether and simply show the landscape, in which this man exists by implication. This ad campaign also testifies to the ways in which objects become gendered through advertising. It is a little-known fact that Marlboro was initially marketed as a “feminine” cigarette (with lipstick-red-tipped filters) until the 1950s, when the Marlboro Man made his first appearance. Indeed, the Marlboro Man has long been appropriated as a camp icon in gay male culture. In 1999, the Marlboro Man billboard on Hollywood’s Sunset Strip was taken down and replaced by an anti-smoking billboard that mocked this icon of buff masculinity. This anti-smoking ad invokes these meanings of the Marlboro Man to recraft (through its use of text) the sign of Marlboro from one of masculinity and the West to its opposite, Marlboro Man = loss of virility, smoking = disease, or Marlboro = death. Our understanding of the Marlboro ad and its spoof is dependent on our knowledge that cowboys are disappearing from the American landscape, that they are cultural symbols of a particular ideology of American expansionism and the frontier that began to fade with urban industrialization and modernization. We bring to these images cultural knowledge of the changing role of men and the recognition that it indicates a fading stereotype of masculine virility.

Whereas Barthes and Saussure deploy these core concepts of the sign, signifier, and signified, Peirce works with a somewhat different model in which the sign (which for Peirce was the word or image) is distinguished from the meaning (which Peirce called the interpretant, which is equivalent to Barthes’s signified) but also the object itself. Peirce’s work has remained important for looking at the distinctions between different kinds of signs and their relationship to the real. Peirce described three kinds of signs or representations: iconic, indexical, and symbolic. In Peirce’s definition, iconic signs resemble their object in some way. Many paintings and drawings are iconic, as are many comics, photographs, and film and television images.

We can see iconic signs at work in Marjane Satrapi’s 2003 autobiographical graphic novel, *Persepolis*, which was later made into an animated film. *Persepolis* tells the story of Satrapi’s childhood in Iran during the time of the Iranian Revolution. Her personal life is caught up in the violent changes in Iranian society. In this image, she depicts herself as a young girl who, with her classmates, has been obliged to wear a veil to school. The simplicity of Satrapi’s style creates iconic signs of the young women and their veils—we know how to read these images, in Peirce’s terms, because they clearly resemble what they are representing. In stark black and white, the veils command visual attention within the frame. Satrapi uses



FIG. 1.20

Frame from graphic novel
*Persepolis: The Story of a
Childhood*, Marjane Satrapi, 2003

visual repetition and framing to depict the homogenizing visual effect of the girls' veils (they all look the same), as well as mark herself as an individual (she appears in a separate frame).

These strategies of framing, motif, and the flattening of space (here, the girls are situated against a blank background) are used to depict character and psychology. The girls' hands are all folded in unison, making clear how they must conform in the school environment (and, by implication, in broader society). Yet their facial expressions establish that they are all responding in different ways (annoyance, dejection, compliance).

The veil has also been used in popular media to promote the image of the Muslim woman as a positive and empowered figure, and not simply as an object of oppression. The cartoon television series *Burka Avenger*, produced by Pakistani rock star and activist Aaron Haroon Rashid and first airing in 2013 in Urdu, features Jiya, a burka-wearing teacher in an all-girls' school who is secretly a superheroine. In this depiction, the burka is a symbol of the integrity, strength, and empowerment Jiya embodies as a Muslim woman.

Unlike iconic signs, which typically resemble their objects, symbolic signs, according to Peirce, bear no obvious relationship to their objects. Symbols are created through an arbitrary (one could say "unnatural") alliance of an object and a meaning. For example, languages are symbolic systems that use conventions to establish meaning. There is no natural link between the word *cat* and an actual cat; language conventions derived from Latin, Germanic, and Old English roots give the word its signification. Symbolic signs are inevitably more restricted in their capacity to convey meaning in that they refer to learned systems. Someone who does not speak English, Dutch, or German will probably recognize an image of a cat (an iconic sign), whereas the word *cat* (a symbolic sign) may have no obvious meaning. National symbols, like flags, are also symbolic signs in Peirce's terms, even

FIG. 1.21

Screen shot from *Burka Avenger*, the Urdu language television series launched in 2013



though some flags might have iconic or pictorial elements within them. Our earlier point that meanings are always contextual is well illustrated

by the 2015 U.S. debates about the flying of the Confederate flag, a controversial symbol of southern pride that is regarded by many as a symbol of slavery. It was this argument of the flag's symbolic and indexical reference to slavery that led activist Brittany Ann Byuairim Newsome to climb a South Carolina flagpole and remove the flag in June 2015. The state removed the flag from its statehouse grounds in July 2015 (with the governor stating that it belonged in a museum rather than on a government building), which launched a national debate about the flag's meaning.

Peirce's discussion of images as indexical is useful in the study of visual culture and, in particular, photography. Indexical signs have an "existential" relationship to their objects. This means that they have coexisted in the same place at some time. Some examples of indexical signs include the symptom of a disease, a pointing hand, and a weathervane. Fingerprints are indexical signs of a person, and, importantly, photographs are indexical signs that testify to the moment that the camera was in the presence of its subject. Indeed, although photographs are both iconic and indexical, their cultural meaning is derived in large part from their indexical meaning as a trace of the real. The indexical quality of photographs is a key factor of their cultural value and power. As we noted earlier, the myth of photographic truth is related to this indexical quality. The Robert Frank photograph discussed earlier (Fig. 1.14) carries the weight of history through its indexical quality, the sense that it is a trace of the past. Whereas critics of the display of the Confederate flag argue that its indexical link to slavery is real and alive, proponents of the flag's display argue that these indexical meanings are no longer active or significant.

Images and Ideology

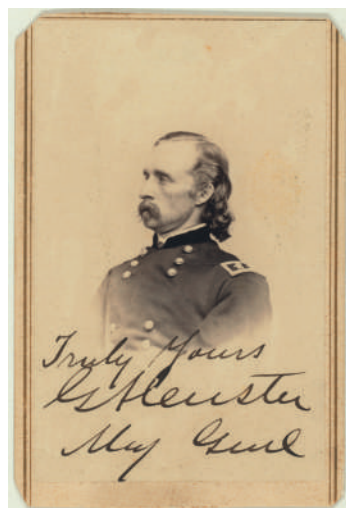
To explore the meaning of images is to recognize that they are produced within dynamics of social power and ideology. Images are an important site through which ideologies, as systems of belief, are produced. When we think of ideology, we may think of propaganda—the crude process of using false representations to lure people into holding beliefs that may compromise their own interests. This understanding of ideology assumes that to act ideologically is to act out of ignorance. In this use, the term *ideology* is pejorative. However, contemporary theorists see ideology as a much more pervasive, mundane process in which we all engage and about which

we are all aware, in some way or other. In this book we define ideologies as the broad but indispensable shared sets of values and beliefs through which individuals live out their complex relations in a range of social networks. Ideologies are widely varied and intersect at all levels of all cultures, from religions to politics to fashion choices. Our ideologies are diverse and ubiquitous; they inform our everyday lives in often subtle and barely noticeable forms. One could say that ideology is the means by which certain values—for example, individual freedom, progress, or the importance of family and home—are made to seem natural. Ideology is manifested in widely shared social assumptions not only about the way things are but also about the way things should be. Images and media representations are some of the forms through which we engage or enlist others to share certain views or not.

Practices of looking are intimately tied to ideology. The image culture in which we live is an arena of diverse and often conflicting ideologies. Images are elements of contemporary advertising and consumer culture through which assumptions about beauty, desire, glamour, and social value are both constructed and lived. Film, television, and video games are media through which we see reinforced ideological constructions such as the value of romantic love, heterosexuality, nationalism, or traditional concepts of good and evil. Contemporary artists often critique dominant ideologies. The most powerful aspect of ideologies is that they appear to be natural or given, rather than part of a belief system that a culture produces to function in a particular way. Ideologies are thus, like Barthes's concept of myth, connotations that appear to be natural. Visual culture is not just representation of ideologies and power relations. It is integral to their production.

FIG. 1.22

Matthew Brady, carte de visite
photograph of U.S. Cavalry Major
General George Armstrong
Custer, 1864



Ideologies permeate the world of entertainment. They also permeate the more mundane realms of life that we do not usually associate with the word *culture*: science, education, medicine, law. All are deeply informed by the ideologies of those social institutions as they intersect with the ideologies of a given culture's religious and cultural realms. Images are used, as we discuss in further chapters, for the identification and classification of people, as evidence of disease in medicine, and as courtroom evidence.

Photography has been a medium through which individual, family, and national values have been affirmed and through which citizens have been categorized and regulated by the state. Shortly after photography was developed in early nineteenth-century Europe, private citizens began hiring photographers to make individual and family portraits. Portraits often

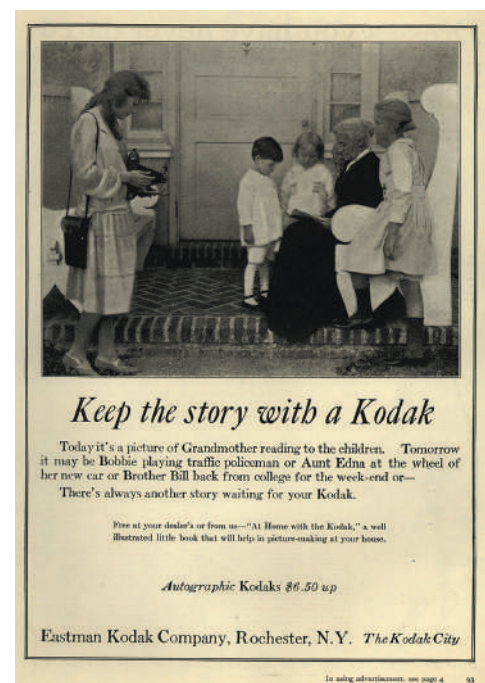
marked important moments such as births, marriages, and deaths (the funerary portrait was a popular convention). One widespread early use of photography was to incorporate the image into a *carte de visite*, or visiting card. These small cards were used by many middle- and upper-class people in European and American societies as calling cards featuring photographic portraits of themselves. In addition, in the late nineteenth century there was a craze of purchasing cartes de visite of famous people, such as the British royal family. This practice signaled the role that photographic images would play in the construction of celebrity throughout the twentieth century. This carte de visite of U.S. General George Custer, which was taken in the 1860s, shows Custer's image and signature, with the salutation "Truly Yours." On the reverse side is the name of the photo studio. Thus, in the nineteenth-century carte de visite, the photographic portrait affirmed individuality and integrated photography into bourgeois life and its values.

Photography's role as a form of social, cultural, and familial preservation was aligned with this affirmation of individuality. Barthes once wrote that photographs always indicate a kind of mortality, evoking death in the moments in which they seem to arrest time, and that they conjure always the past, the "what has been."¹⁶ Photographs are one of the primary means through which we remember events, conjure up the presence of an absent person, and experience longing for someone we have lost or someone we desire but whom we have never seen or met. They are crucial to what we remember, but they can also enable us to forget those things that were not photographed. With digital imaging, photography has lost some of its sense of "what has been" that derives from its indexical quality. But the reason is not that the camera does not need to be in the same place as the object it depicts (it does, unless we are speaking of a simulation). Rather, it is that we have become so used to the possibilities for creative manipulation of location, proximity, and historical period, all of which can be evoked with digital effects.

In the mid-nineteenth century, through the proliferation of photographic studios, photography emerged as a key family practice, as many middle-class people took family portraits and exhibited them on their mantels. Many also took portraits of the dead, in particular of their children who had died. Photography thus quickly became a medium through which family memories could be retained. By the twentieth century, the Kodak company was selling the idea that amateur photography, which Kodak promoted through its consumer cameras and film developing, should be about the family

FIG. 1.23

Eastman Kodak ad, 1920s



and preserving important life moments, “Kodak Moments,” that affirmed family coherence and continuity. Photography has thus played an important role in the ideology of the family and the social values attached to it.

Photography’s role in affirming ideologies of family and individuality is paralleled by its role in affirming ideologies of social institutions, for the purposes of categorization, management, and repression. Photo theorist Allan Sekula writes that photography developed quickly into a medium that functions both honorifically (in personal portraiture) and repressively (in the classifying of citizens according to racial and ethnic categories in security surveillance images, for example). Portraiture was, according to Sekula, the key in a system of double representation. Some portraits affirmed the individual self in ways that ceremonies long had done, and some portraits created a generalized look and thus defined the individual’s opposite: the pathological type, or the racial *other*.¹⁷ In this second case, we can see the integral role of photography in social repression through concepts of science, normalcy, and social order.

From the beginning of the medium in the mid-1900s, photographs were widely regarded as tools of science and public surveillance. Astronomers used photographic film to mark star movements. Photographs were used in hospitals, mental institutions, and prisons to record and study populations, in hopes that they could be classified and tracked over time. Indeed, in rapidly growing urban industrial centers, photographs quickly became an important way for police and public health officials to monitor urban populations perceived to be growing not only in numbers of people but also in rates of crime and social deviance. We discuss the emergence of photography as a tool of social institutionalization in Chapter 9.

Here a man at a rally in Barcelona, Spain, is pictured holding up his own official photo-identification card. He is using the state-issued card, which identifies him as Catalan, to make the case that Catalonia should be recognized as a separate state.

What is the legacy of this use of images to manage and control populations? Portrait images, like fingerprints, are frequently used as personal identification—on passports, driver’s licenses, credit cards, and identification cards in schools, in the welfare system, and in many other social institutions. Photographs are a primary medium of evidence in the criminal justice system. We are accustomed to the fact that most stores, banks, and public places are outfitted with surveillance cameras. Our daily lives are tracked not only through our credit records but also

FIG. 1.24

A man holds a Catalan identification card during a rally calling for the independence of Catalonia, Barcelona, Spain, September 11, 2015



through surveillance camera records of our movements and through the potential for monitoring in social media venues such as Facebook and Twitter. One's social media accounts are never fully private and are always available for surveillance by a host of sources. When we engage in social media, we encounter the potential of being in the public eye and of being tracked. It is increasingly the norm to forgo privacy in favor of participating in social networking, using photography as a lingua franca across our spheres of friends, family, and coworkers.

The meaning of images, however, can change dramatically when they move across these different social contexts. Today, the contexts in which images circulate have become infinitely more complex than they were even a few decades ago. Digital images taken on mobile phones are uploaded instantly to Facebook, Instagram, and Flickr, videos are widely shared on YouTube and other sites, and images are “recognized” and tagged by image software. Photographs and videos of private moments circulate rapidly on the web and are potentially seen by millions. This means that any given image or video might be displayed in many very different contexts, each of which might give it different inflections and meanings. It also means, to the dismay of many politicians and celebrities, that once images are set loose in these image distribution networks, they cannot be fully retrieved or regulated. Even cherished and protected family photographs can become evidence in the workplace, in law, and in the public eye long after their original circumstances. The circulation of images is increasingly difficult to control as the means of image reproduction and circulation proliferate with advances in networks and software. The legal regulation of image circulation through copyright and fair use laws is an issue we consider in Chapter 5.

Image Icons

One of the ways that we can see how images generate meaning across contexts is to look at image icons and how they both retain and change meaning across different contexts. Here, we use the term *icon* in a general sense, rather than in the specific sense used by Peirce that we discussed earlier. An icon is an image that refers to something outside of its individual components, something (or someone) that has great symbolic meaning for many people. Icons are often perceived to represent universal concepts, emotions, and meanings. Thus an image produced in a specific culture, time, and place might be interpreted as having broader meaning and the capacity to evoke similar responses across all cultures and in all viewers.

The polar bear has become a ubiquitous icon of climate change. A particularly iconic scene is that of a polar bear clinging to a dwindling ice floe. Melting ice is a signifier of climate change and the clinging polar bear a signifier of endangerment to life caused by a warming climate. Polar bears signify cold—a cold swim is referred to as a polar bear dip. The endangered polar bear is thus a key signifier of the larger array of problems caused by the earth's climate getting warmer. Images

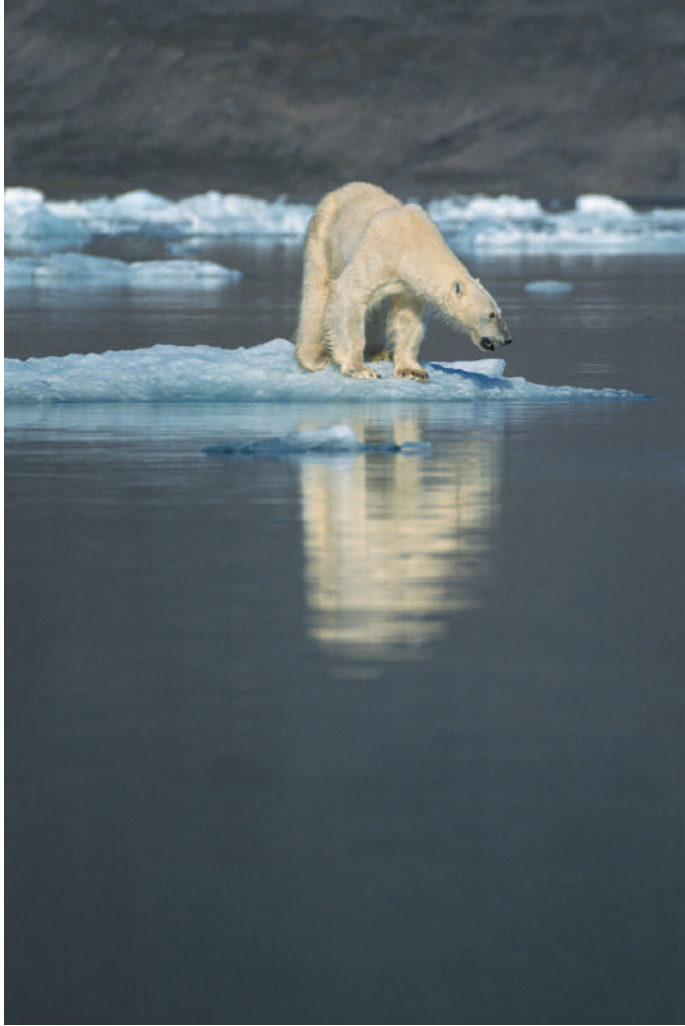


FIG. 1.25
Polar bear on ice floe, 2005

like these are signs of the global distress and threats to life posed by climate change.

As our discussion of this image shows, icons can be quite reductive. Climate change is obviously a complex issue that cannot be reduced to ice melting and polar bears in precarious situations. However, **simplification is central to the creation of icons** that can convey iconic meaning across many different contexts. The polar bear image resonates around the world. In climate justice protest marches, the polar bear is often prominently featured on posters, logos, even in costumes. It has become an icon for a global movement. One meme that circulated widely

among the 2014 global climate justice marches is the image of a protestor dressed as a polar bear being arrested in New York City.



FIG. 1.26
Police arrest a climate change protestor dressed in a polar bear costume, New York City, 2014



FIG. 1.27

Jeff Widener, *Tank Man* (aka *Unknown Protester*), Tiananmen Square, Beijing, China, 1989

Other key features of image icons are how they can circulate through visual networks and how they get reworked into new images that carry with them aspects of the original. This 1989 image of a lone student at Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China, is an icon recognized around the world. In this historical demonstration, students led the call for democratic social reforms, and many lost their lives. This image of the 1989 student protest became a powerful icon of the demand for democracy worldwide.

The value of this image, often called Tank Man, is based in part on its capturing of a special moment (it depicts a key moment in the June Fourth Incident during which media coverage was restricted) and the speed with which it was transmitted around the world (it was the pre-Internet era, so the image circulated in part by fax). As a depiction of one student's courage before the machinery of military power, this photograph achieved worldwide recognition, becoming an icon of political struggles for freedom of expression. Its denotative meaning is simple: a young man stands before a tank. Its connotative and iconic meanings are commonly understood to be more complex and widely relevant: the importance of individual actions in the face of injustice and the capacity of one individual to stand up to power. This image thus has value not as a singular image (once broadcast, it was not one image but millions of images on TV sets and in newspapers, though it was censored in China) but through its speed of transmission, its informative value, and its political statement, which is both specific to the protest and more broad, capturing the individual resolve behind many democratic movements around the world.



FIG. 1.28

San Francisco protest against decision to hold Olympics in Beijing, April 9, 2008

It is not incidental that the image achieves this iconic status through the depiction not of the many thousands of protestors at Tiananmen Square but of one lone individual. As Robert Hariman and John Lucaites explain in *No Caption Needed*, the image's iconicity derives in part from its simplicity, from the fact that the event seems to take place in a deserted public space (there is actually a crowd outside the frame), and from its modernist perspective that affords viewer distance.¹⁸ They argue that depicting the lone individual potentially limits the political imagination within a liberal framework of individualism, which contrasts with the fact that the student movement was a large collective undertaking, not one of an individual.

The iconic status of the Tiananmen Square image has resulted in a broad array of remakes. For example, this image emerged during 2008 protests against the oppression of Tibet in the months before the Summer Olympics in Beijing. Here, the protestors have effectively combined the iconic sign of the Olympic rings with the iconic sign of the tank and student to put their protest in historical context.

In 2009, Chinese artist Liu Wei created a video work, *Unforgettable Memory*, in which he shows the iconic photograph



FIG. 1.29

Screen shot from video *Unforgettable Memory*, Liu Wei, 2009

FIG. 1.30

Raphael, *The Small Cowper Madonna*, c. 1505 (oil on wood panel, 59.5 × 44 cm)

of the tank man to people in the street and is met with denial and evasion. In this work, the image is a means to disrupt collective forgetting, to pull this event of the past into the present, reminding people of the hundreds who were massacred that day. The artist notes that people typically respond without showing empathy or mourning, but when confronted with the picture, they fall silent or run away from their own memories.

Image icons are often experienced as universal, yet their meanings are always historically and contextually produced. Consider the example of the image of mother and child that is ubiquitous in Western art. The iconography of the mother and child is widely believed to represent universal concepts of maternal emotion, the essential bond between a mother and her offspring, and the importance of motherhood throughout the world and human history. The sheer number of paintings with this theme attests not simply to the centrality of the Madonna figure in Christianity but also to the ideological assumption that the bond between mother and child is universal and natural, not culturally and historically specific and socially constructed.

To question this assumption means looking at the cultural, historical, and social meanings that are specific in these images. This supposedly “universal” bond was actually restricted to specific privileged groups. Icons do not represent individuals, nor do they represent universal values. Thus, the mother and child motif present in these two examples, an Italian Renaissance panel displayed in an art museum and a Mexican devotional candle representing the Virgin of Guadalupe most often seen on small alters and mantels in homes and small businesses, can be read as evidence of not only universal ideals but also specific cultural and religious values and beliefs surrounding motherhood and its symbolic meanings. The Madonna of Raphael’s painting is seated against a landscape looking out of the frame in a detached manner as a curiously oversized baby Jesus stands on her lap. Our Lady of Guadalupe, regarded by some as the protector of unborn babies,





FIG. 1.31

Virgen de Guadalupe candles for sale at Target, Los Angeles, September 2016, designed after apparition on cloth (dated 1531) enshrined in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mexico City

stands looking reverently in the general direction of the cherub beneath her. The closer we look at these two images, the more culturally and historically specific they are revealed to be.

It is in relationship to this broad tradition of Madonna and child icons that more recent images of women and children gain meaning. For instance, Dorothea Lange's famous photograph, *Migrant Mother*, depicts a woman, also a mother, during the California migration of the 1930s. This photograph is regarded as an iconic image of the Great Depression. It is famous because it evokes the despair and perseverance of those who survived the hardships of that time. Yet the image gains much of its meaning from its

implicit reference to the history of artistic depictions of women and their children, such as Madonna and child images, and its difference from them. This mother is anxious and distracted. Her children cling to her and burden her thin frame. She looks not at her children but outward as if toward her future—one seemingly with little promise. This image derives its meaning largely from a viewer's knowledge of the historical moment it represents. At the same time, it makes a statement about the complex role of motherhood that is informed by its place in the iconic tradition.

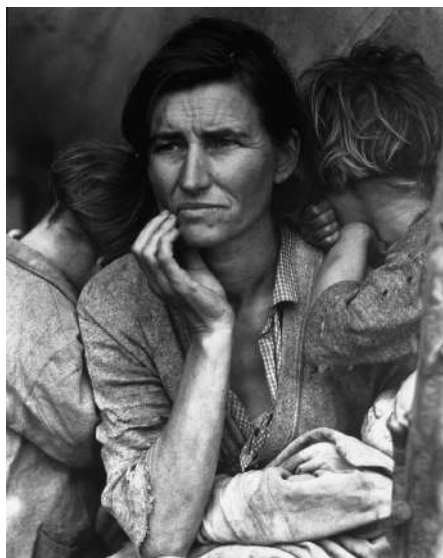


FIG. 1.32

Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Mother*, Nipomo, California, 1936 (gelatin silver print, 12½ × 9⅞")

This photograph has historically specific meanings, yet its function as an icon allows it to have meanings that go beyond that historical moment. Lange took the photograph while working on a government documentation project funded by the Farm Security Administration (FSA). With other photographers, she produced an extraordinary archive of photographs of the Great Depression in the United States in the 1930s. Lange was one of a small number of women photographers who



FIG. 1.33

Florence Thompson, the “Migrant Mother” in Dorothea Lange’s 1936 photo, interviewed on October 10, 1978

worked on the project, and the story of her taking this image is legendary in the history of photography. She took five pictures of this woman and her children. Yet for many years little was known about the woman whose face became perhaps the most famous icon of personal struggle during the Great Depression. Years later, her identity was revealed by her children, who hoped to use her name to raise funds to support hospital bills following a stroke. Florence Owens Thompson thus was featured once again in press photographs, many of them mother-and-child images in that they include her grown children, the daughters who appeared in the famous Lange photograph. But the reveal was fraught with irony. Her hard life never got much easier; the photograph that brought Lange so much fame brought Owens Thompson very little very late.¹⁹

To call an image an icon raises the question of context. For whom is *Migrant Mother* iconic and for whom is it not? The images of motherhood we have shown are specific to particular cultures at particular moments in time. Similarly, the classical art history images of Madonna and child may not serve as icons for motherhood in all cultures.

To interpret images is to examine the assumptions that we as viewers bring to them at different times and in different places and to decode their visual language. All images contain layers of meaning that include their formal aspects, their cultural and sociohistorical references, the ways they reference the images that precede and surround them,

and the contexts in which they are displayed. Reading and interpreting images is one way that we, as viewers, assign value to the cultures in which we live. Practices of looking, then, are not passive acts of consumption. By looking at and engaging with images in the world, we influence their meanings and uses. In the next chapter we examine the many ways that viewers create meaning when they engage in looking.

Notes

1. Weegee [Arthur Fellig], *Naked City* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, [1945] 2002).
2. Torin Douglas, "How 7/7 Democratised the Media," *BBC News*, July 4, 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/5142702.stm.
3. Robert Mackay, "Israelis Watch Bombs Drop on Gaza from Front-Row Seats," *New York Times*, July 14, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/15/world/middleeast/israelis-watch-bombs-drop-on-gaza-from-front-row-seats.html?_r=1.
4. See Michel Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe*, with illustrations and letters by René Magritte, trans. and ed. James Harkness (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
5. Hal Foster, "Preface," in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), ix.
6. Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 2.
7. Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look*, 24.
8. <http://notabugsplat.com/>.
9. See William J. Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), Chapter 4.
10. <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/509243/Student-convinced-family-trip-around-Asia-despite-never-leaving-bedroom>; see also <http://www.zillavandenborn.nl/portfolio/sjezus-zeg-zilla/>.
11. Allan Sekula, "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning," in *Thinking Photography*, ed. Victor Burgin (London: Macmillan, 1982), 94.
12. Robert Frank, *The Americans* (Millerton, NY: Aperture, [1959] 1978).
13. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, [1957] 1972). Republished by Vintage (UK), 2009.
14. *Paris Match*, issue 326, June 25 to July 02, 1955.
15. Barthes, *Mythologies*, 116.
16. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 14–15.
17. Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 6–7.
18. Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), Chapter 7; see also their website at <http://www.nocaptionneeded.com>.
19. For an extensive overview of interpretations of the "Migrant Mother" image, see Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, 49–67; and Liz Wells, *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, 5th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015).

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Viewers Make Meaning

Images generate meanings, yet the meanings of a work of art, a photograph, or a media text do not, strictly speaking, lie in the work itself, as if placed there by the image's producer for viewers to find. Rather, these meanings are produced through complex negotiations between viewers and image texts; they are shaped by the social practices through which images are interpreted, shared, and produced. This meaning production involves at least three elements besides the image itself and its producer: codes and conventions that structure the image, which cannot be separated from the image's content; viewers and how they interpret or experience the image; and exhibition and viewing context (which includes geographic and national location, time period, institutional setting, cultural and/or religious framework, and more). Although images may have dominant or primary meanings, viewers may interpret and use them in ways that do not conform to these meanings.

Throughout this book, we use the term *viewer* rather than *audience*. A viewer is, in the most basic sense of the term, a person who looks. An audience is, by definition, a group of lookers/listeners; the term is often used to describe the consumer group that forms around a given commodity (viewers of a television show make up its audience, for example). In focusing on the concept of the viewer, we highlight an individual's activity, which we understand to be situated in a network of social practices. These practices are enacted not simply between individual human subjects who look and are looked at, but also among people, objects, and technologies in social places and spaces. Viewing, even for an individual subject, is a multimodal activity. The elements that come into play when we look include not only the images we are looking directly at but also other images with which they are displayed or published, our own bodies, other bodies, built and natural objects, technology and equipment, institutions, private or "natural" places, and the social

practices and techniques through which we engage in looking. Viewing is a relational and social practice whether one looks in private or in public and whether the image is personal (a photograph of a loved one), technical (a medical image used for diagnosis in a hospital), or public (a work of photojournalism).

Interpellation is an important concept in our formulation of the viewer. To interpellate, in the traditional usage of this concept, is to interrupt a procedure or to question someone or something formally, as in a legal or governmental setting (in a parliamentary procedure, for example). In the 1970s, political and media theorists adapted the concept of interpellation to better describe the practices through which ideology operates. Ideology refers to the conscious and unconscious beliefs, feelings, and values shared in any given social group. Interpellation is one of numerous processes through which ideology is carried out.

To be interpellated is, quite simply, to be hailed or called in a way in which you recognize yourself to be the person intended by the call. Imagine that you are driving a car. You hear a siren wail behind you. The sound catches your attention, making you look into your rearview mirror, where you see spinning lights on a police car. You are “hailed” by the sound and image, recognizing yourself as the possible intended recipient of this audiovisual address meant to tell you “pull over.” You may feel personally implicated, even if you believe the address can’t possibly be meant for you (let’s say you weren’t speeding, you didn’t run a light). Hailed by the police car, you instantly recognize yourself as a subject of the (traffic) law of the state, even if you know you are not guilty of any legal infraction. In fact, you may feel interpellated (hailed) even if in fact the address was not intended for you—let’s say the police car pulls past you and pursues someone else. You still felt called out, for an instant. And if you are among the groups of people subject to racial profiling, you may feel interpellated in the sense of being targeted for no other reason than how you look. In this case, you are interpellated by the law, but your response may be not to “buy into” that ideology and imagine yourself to be guilty but rather to resist and recognize you are being subjected to an unjust visual logic—a racialized political ideology of appearances. But still, you felt yourself to be hailed, even if you didn’t like it or believe yourself to be the right addressee, or rightfully addressed.

The French political theorist Louis Althusser makes the point that “ideology *interpellates* individuals as subjects.” In our example, the ideology at play involves the law, specifically the traffic laws to which all drivers are subject. Althusser proposes that ideology’s structure is enacted through a visual system (we might also say a broadly sensory system that includes sounds, touch, and smell). In our example, sounds (the siren) and images (the emblems on the police car) and a logic of the gaze (the police officer looking at you through your rearview mirror) all interpellate you into the ideology of the law, whether or not you believed the implied accusation or message to be right or true. In Althusser’s theory of interpellation and ideology, looking practices are always fraught with power and may involve

oppression, and our participation in them may involve tension around belief and resistance to the law. To be caught up in ideology does not always mean to share in a belief but rather more often entails being complexly caught up in its network of power relations. As we discuss further in Chapter 3, looking entails complex power relationships in which we may act, or may be made to act, in a variety of ways.

We use the term *interpellate*, then, to describe the way that images, sounds, and audiovisual media texts not only catch our attention but also enlist us into recognizing ourselves as the subject of an address by another within a system of power. Althusser explains that viewers “work by themselves” and don’t need to be forced to look or listen when hailed by ideology. Images and sounds hail viewers at the level of the individual, even when each of us knows that many people will look at the same image and listen to the same sounds—that the image or sound is not intended “just for me” but reaches a wider audience, perhaps even a whole nation. This experience illustrates an interesting paradox around individual and group enlistment into ideology: for viewer interpellation by an image/sound to be effective, the viewer-listener must implicitly understand himself or herself to be a member of a social group that shares codes and conventions through which the image/sound becomes meaningful. I may feel that an image touches me personally, but it can do so only if I understand myself also to be a member of a group to whom its codes and conventions “speak” personally, even if the image does not “say” the same thing to me as it does to someone else. You may love to wear jeans and your social media may be filled with ads for them because of your previous online purchasing habits, but you do not have to like a particular brand to be interpellated by an advertisement for it that pops up in your feed, or to recognize that you are the intended recipient of the advertisement’s address, despite your dislike for the particular brand. To be interpellated by an image is to know that that image is meant “for you,” even if you know that you do not buy into the tastes, beliefs, or cultures it invokes, even as you have been targeted as part of its group.

Thus, being interpellated is not necessarily about believing in something; it may involve rejecting identification with the ideology in which one is nonetheless caught up, perhaps simply by feeling internally alienated by it, or perhaps by performing acts of resistance to its messages and culture. But whether we feel belonging within, exclusion from, or outright rejection of the hailing ideology, the concept of interpellation shows how we are shaped as social subjects through immersion in a context of ideologies, such as laws and the discourses that surround them. This is the case whether that ideology is the law of the state, brand culture, religion, politics, or any other cultural institution.

This U.S. Army recruiting poster created by the artist James Montgomery Flagg is a particularly direct example of the way in which images address and interpellate viewers, constituting them as ideological subjects. The poster was created in 1917 and then revived during World War II and became a work that the U.S. Library of Congress calls “the most popular personification of the United States.”¹



FIG. 2.1

U.S. Army recruitment poster, 1917, from lithograph by James Montgomery Flagg

Uncle Sam's eyes look directly at the viewer, his pointing finger aligned with his piercing look. His image and words address both a collective national subject and an individual looker and listener: "I want **YOU**" to join your country's army. The "loud" **YOU** underlines the poster's address to the individual: the demand to join the army is made to not just any Americans, but to **YOU**, the individual who is caught in Uncle Sam's line of sight. It is hard to escape this poster's pointed address. The image has interpellated millions into recognition of themselves as individual subjects of the state singled out for action by that imperious finger.

Yet we must not assume that everyone who sees this image feels interpellated into an ideology of U.S. nationalism. It is possible to respond to this image by refusing interpellation, as a subject who is resistant to or incensed by the ideology of national militarism. Just like the subject who says "not

me!" in response to the police siren, so too we may be "enlisted" by ideology in ways that the image's producers did not intend, and we may act in ways that are counter to their intent. In his well-known

essay, "What Do Pictures Want?," W. J. T. Mitchell writes that this poster helps us to think about how pictures have a kind of agency and can make demands of viewers. Thus, according to Mitchell, we should ask, "What does this picture want?" rather than "What does it do?" This approach allows us to think about pictures as sites where desire and power are negotiated, rather than as sheer manipulation or propaganda.² This picture wants young men to enlist in the army and wants them to be willing to die for the nation, yet, as we note, the viewer may resist this demand.

When we talk about interpellation, the term *audience*, which is often used in communication and marketing analysis, is not a highly useful concept because it does not adequately capture interpellation's paradox in which collective address is made to feel personal. Even the most personal images work through this paradoxical process of being constituted as an individual through a process that speaks to many: I may be personally moved by a photograph, yet that photograph's address works through codes and conventions of "the personal" that are widely shared. Selfies taken with stars and politicians sometimes work this way, generating a sense of familiarity with everyday people who "hail" us as their peers even if we do not know them or share their appreciation of the familiar celebrity with whom they appear. For example, in a selfie taken by a fan with boxing champion Ronda Rousey, it is easy to feel the fan's sense of delight in being close to the admired icon, even as we know he has no true "personal" relationship with her (Rousey will assume the same intimate pose with many fans) and even if we care little about Rousey and women's boxing culture ourselves. As viewers of the image, we are interpellated into the "intimate" culture of the fan selfie.

By focusing on the viewer throughout this book, we are emphasizing how images, sounds, and audiovisual media texts touch audience members through experiences of belonging, resistance, individual agency, and interpretive autonomy. Many twentieth-century critics of the culture industry saw the viewer as a figure duped by popular culture's mass-circulated images. We understand interpellation differently. To be interpellated or touched as an individual viewer is a common and unavoidable aspect of encountering images and media texts. Even if we are wise to the strategies of interpellation, and even if we dislike the message, we still get caught up. Yet individual human agency and desire are not wholly controlled by industry market experts; dominant meanings are not the only or the most important ones that we experience when we are interpellated by images and sounds.

By considering viewers, rather than a generic concept of audiences (an abstraction to which marketers and program producers target their products), we may discern the many ways that viewers and listeners make meanings that go beyond producers' intentions. This is not to say that individual choice and taste are the dominant forces behind meaning making. Rather, viewer engagement with images and the field of looking are always shaped by context, which includes a range of factors such as culture, history, sexuality, class, national setting, and time period.



FIG. 2.2

Ronda Rousey, UFC Women's Bantamweight Champion, takes selfies with fans during the UFC 193 media event at Etihad Stadium, September 16, 2015, in Melbourne, Australia

Producers' Intended Meanings

In the social media era, almost anyone with a mobile phone can produce images. Many of us are immersed in digital social media, browsing online throughout the day and sending, posting, and receiving text messages and images that document and comment upon our every activity, from the routine to the extraordinary. Your day might be punctuated by dozens or even hundreds of photographs sent and received by text, Snapchat, or Instagram. In many cases, the producer of the images you receive is not the news or media industry but an individual, perhaps someone or a small group of people that you know personally, with whom you exchange meanings and messages that are sent, received, and interpreted in a reciprocal circuit. In the back-and-forth flow, meanings and messages are fluid and changing. Much of the pleasure of this exchange comes not only from “getting” the meaning intended by your friend or family member and communicating back what you intend but also from re-interpreting and joking about intended and received meanings, changing the messages tied to a given picture, icon, or written text message through group interaction. This fluidity of signification is an aspect of all visual

and media cultures, whether we are talking about art, science, news, or personal communication.

We live surrounded by the images, sounds, and media texts produced by media companies. These images, advertisements, video games, and popular culture texts are meant for us to watch, consume, and play. We encounter these sorts of images and texts primarily as consumers and re-users, not as direct producers. We encounter them through media forms that are designed primarily for viewer consumption, even if consumer interaction is encouraged through social media strategies such as the posting of questions addressed directly to the consumer on brand blogs, or the reposting of brand images on personal social media. In an age when so many of these images circulate through re-using and sharing, we may still ask: Who is regarded as the producer of these mass-circulation images and texts, and how are dominant or intended meanings shaped?

To produce is to make. But the concept of the producer becomes complicated when we note that most forms of media beyond personal social media involve multiple producers working at many different levels of production on the same text. Indeed, in many creative industries the concept of “the producer” is typically tied to a particular job: the overseeing of funding and development of a project and not the actual hands-on tasks of doing and making a work. For instance, advertisements, feature films, and video games all involve creative input from multiple individuals. Video games are rarely the work of a single designer, director, or artist. We may regard one individual as the primary artist or author of the game, or we may think of the game as being authored by a company. In the advertising industry, the term *producer* may refer to an advertising agency, the lead designer, or the company whose product is represented in the advertisement. The term has varied meanings in art as well. We may refer to an individual artist or an art collective as the producer of a work. But this meaning is very different from that of the producer of a film or video game in those respective industries in which the term designates the funding and development professional.

It can be useful, at times, to use the term *producer* in the contemporary context of art and media to refer to works that involve multiple agents that are not corporations, but which operate collectively. For example, HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN? is a global, multidisciplinary collective of artists and writers of the African diaspora. The name, which reads “How do you say yam in African?,” refers to the shared cultures of Africa (the yam is a common food in many African cuisines) and the common misconception that “African” is a unified identity when in fact there are many major differences between the continent’s nations (there is no shared “African” language or politics). Work by the group, whose membership changes over time, was included in the 2014 Whitney Museum of American Art Biennial without attribution of any individual artist name or credit. Similarly, a commercial artwork might have as its producer a studio, company, or corporation, and not a named or credited individual.



FIG. 2.3

Screen shot from digital film *Good Stock on the Dimension Floor: An Opera*, HOWDOYOUSAYYAMIN-AFRICAN?, 2014

Some artists have formed collectives to critique the economy and culture of the fine artist as creative genius and the gallery system in which fine art acquires value. Group Material, a collective active from 1979 to 1996, made public art that sometimes took the form of public street signs, advertisements, and billboards. For the series “AIDS and Insurance” (1990), the collective rented advertising display space on New York City subways and buses. Other artist collectives, such as the Guerrilla Girls and the Yes Men, assume anonymous or faux corporate identities to challenge art world and corporate tactics and practices.

The French theorist Roland Barthes addressed these questions of authority and power in his 1967 essay “The Death of the Author.”³ According to Barthes, there is no one ultimate authorial meaning or intention in a work for readers to uncover. The notion of the single, individual author is no longer “alive” in the work of reading cultural texts, which are strongly influenced by context. We can adapt Barthes’s concept of the disappearance of the author as an authority on a text’s meaning to consider questions of power as they are enacted between viewers and producers of images and media texts. Although works may convey dominant meanings, it is the job of the critical reader not to simply find and point out dominant meanings to others, but to show how these meanings are created through their various contexts. Any given text is open to meanings and interpretations that exist alongside and even against more obvious or intended meanings. Barthes suggests that a reader (and a viewer) must be analytic and critical and use interpretive practices grounded in the historical and cultural contexts of a given text or image. He states that it is a myth that the author is the primary producer of the text’s meaning. Rather, images and media texts’ meanings are produced through viewers’ interpretation and negotiations rather than the author’s or producer’s intent.

Barthes's idea of critical reading was adapted by media critics and theorists who wanted to emphasize the importance of actively critical viewing practices. In his 1969 essay "What Is an Author?," the French philosopher Michel Foucault noted that the concept of author did not always exist and will probably pass out of relevance.⁴ He proposed that we use the concept "author function" rather than "author." In this sense, we can think of the author not as an individual person, but as a function of a discourse around which forms a set of expectations, beliefs, and ideas, as well as particular patterns of circulation. We borrow this concept to think about the ideological value of the idea of the producer as "someone" (whether a writer or an artist as brand or a company) that is the image behind any given work, recognized as the author of the ideas expressed in it. We might thus ask not "who is the author of this text" but, rather, "what is this text's author function" within a given discourse. In a work of music video, the "author function" of attribution of the video to a famous artist or film director may confer special creative value to the work, as opposed to having it bear the production company's name as author.

It is important to note that it is the expression of the idea that is "owned" by an author, artist, or corporation, and not the physical work itself, which may be one of a series, like a copy of a book. Copyright law is based on the premise that ownership of creative expression can be traced to a single entity, whether an individual or a company. In countries that observe moral rights, ownership of the expression of an idea cannot be sold or given away. But not all countries observe moral rights (the United States does not, for example), and these are not the only criteria for ownership. The "producer function" concept helps us to understand that "authorship" derives not just from the individual creator but also from the owner of rights. An Associated Press (AP) photograph, for example, is owned by AP and not the individual photographer, whose contract typically signs copyright over to AP. When we speak of an Apple product, we are more likely to think of its producer as Apple and not the individual or team who designed the product. In both cases, we tend to think of the corporation as "author," and in these cases the corporation is also the copyright owner, even though the expression of the idea may have been that of a creative individual or group working under contract with that corporation. (We discuss copyright at greater length in Chapter 4.)

The idea that practices of looking take into account the authority and power of the historically and culturally situated viewer in the production of meanings was especially important at the moment in history at which Barthes and Foucault wrote, the 1960s. This was just before the home video and personal computing eras. Consumers widely used personal and instant photographic cameras and home movie cameras prior to these eras. However, the video camera and the personal computer would eventually escalate the extent to which consumers could produce images and audiovisual works without professional laboratories or media production companies. The growth of consumer markets for amateur video and

image production software in the 1980s and 1990s and the rise of social media and smartphones in the early 2000s elevated the concept of the “consumer as producer,” introducing the prosumer. This concept, introduced by Alvin Toffler, was widely used in the 1990s and 2000s to describe what was then the new broadening market in production equipment for media consumers previously consigned primarily to viewing modalities. While the idea of the consumer as producer of meaning was quite radical in the 1960s and 1970s, today it is an everyday reality strongly tied to an ideology of individual consumer creativity in a market flooded with all manner of production devices that are easy to use and compatible with a wide array of home computing platforms. We routinely act as both producers and consumers, curating our Facebook pages with manipulated images, posting videos to blogs, and uploading images to Instagram for our personal “audience” of followers.

Despite these changes in the concept of authorship, it remains the case that most images have a meaning that their producers prefer. Advertising agencies, for example, conduct extensive focus group research to try to ensure that the meanings they want to convey about a particular product are the ones that viewers will perceive. Artists, graphic designers, and filmmakers create images with the intent and the hope that we will read their work in a certain way. Architects design buildings with the intent that people will engage with and utilize the spaces in the ways they plan. As we have noted, though, analyzing images, design products, and built spaces according to producer intent is rarely useful. We usually have no way to know for certain what a producer, designer, or artist intended his or her work to mean, and despite all intentions, works inevitably are used differently, whether they are used in place or taken into new contexts than those for which they were planned.

Thus, producer intentions may not match up with what viewers and users actually experience; producers cannot fully control context. The clutter of an urban space like Times Square affects how viewers interpret the many designed spaces, structures, advertisements, and retail items encountered there. The place holds an ever-changing mix of media and design. A producer cannot easily predict or control context in such a changeable environment. How viewers interpret a YouTube video will be influenced by the array of videos to which the video is linked by any given search algorithm. Similarly, your Facebook feed is organized by an algorithm and not wholly by you. Your feed will be differently configured each time you log in. When an image goes viral on social media, its meanings are opened up to influence by a broad range of contextual factors including public opinion, journalism, commentary, and responses from political, religious, civic, and activist groups. These may generate more images in response.

Visual culture scholar Nicholas Mirzoeff has introduced the term *intervisuality* to describe this heightened mix and range of imaging engagements. Any viewing experience may involve a range of media forms, infrastructure and meaning

networks, and intertextual meanings.⁵ Meanings are created in large part when, where, and by whom images and media texts are consumed. Changes in meaning are thus not failures on the part of the image producer; rather, they are part of the “producer function” in which ideology works through a range of situated interactions, struggles over meaning and power, and mixes of intention, feeling, and interpretation in which any given text and its viewer-listener are entangled. The twenty-first-century escalation of global image and media flows over the web has made the “producer function” and the complex production of meaning even more pronounced.

Aesthetics and Taste

All images are subject to judgments according to standards such as beauty, hipness, and political orientation. The criteria used to interpret and give value to images depend on cultural codes concerning what makes an image pleasing or unpleasant, hurtful or positive, shocking or banal, interesting or boring. As we have explained, these qualities do not reside in the image or object but depend on the contexts in which it is viewed, on the prevailing and competing laws and codes in a given society, and on the viewer who is making that judgment.

Viewer interpretations often involve two fundamental concepts of value: aesthetics and taste. When we say that we appreciate a work for “aesthetic” reasons, we usually mean that the work’s value resides in the pleasure it brings us through its beauty, its style, or the creative and technical virtuosity that went into its production. Aesthetics has been associated throughout history with philosophy and the arts, and aesthetic objects have been understood to stand apart from utilitarian objects. A pot that sits on the stove, even if it is a “high design” object, is utilitarian in ways that a painting that hangs on the wall is not. The painting’s function is largely aesthetic. In the twentieth century, the idea of aesthetics steadily moved away from the belief that beauty resides within a particular object or image. By the end of the century, it was widely accepted that aesthetic judgment about what we consider naturally beautiful or universally pleasing is in fact culturally determined. We no longer think of beauty as a universally shared or innate set of qualities. Contemporary concepts of aesthetics emphasize the ways in which the criteria for what is beautiful and what is not are based on taste and cultural influence.

Taste is not simply a matter of individual interpretation, however. Rather, taste is informed by one’s class, cultural background, education, national framework, and other aspects of identity and social experience. In 1979, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu put forward this idea of taste as social, not innate, in his influential work *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*.⁶ Bourdieu provided a description of tastes and their origins in patterns of class distinction. Following from Bourdieu, “taste” is culturally specific, class-based, and nonuniversal. When we say that a person “has good taste,” we may mean

that he or she participates in a class-based notion in which aesthetic value and wealth are conflated. But whether or not the person “with good taste” actually inhabits a high-class position does not matter. “Taste” can be acquired through cultural education or enculturation into a system of values. Someone who does not have the means to own a luxury Mercedes may nonetheless have “discerning taste,” appreciating the design and workmanship associated with the status brand. Or we may describe appreciation of a beat-up vintage Mercedes that runs on bio-diesel as “good taste” not because the car’s visual aesthetics are outstanding, but because it represents an aesthetics of environmentalism. In both cases, taste entails having education about value. We may regard someone as having “good” taste when he or she shares an aesthetic or style that we believe reflects some special, elite knowledge, such as participation in a market that trades in “quality,” edgy, or elite brands. For example, buying food at a status store such as Whole Foods may convey to some good taste, but because the food comes at relatively high cost when compared to community cooperatives or chain prices, some might view shopping at Whole Foods as an exercise in bad taste, vulgar consumerism masquerading as discerning politics and taste.

Defiance-of-status taste can be a political statement against the classist association of good taste with high cost. “Bad taste” is sometimes regarded as a product of ignorance of what is deemed “quality” or “tasteful” within a society. But embracing “bad” taste or “artless” taste can also signify cultural belonging to an educated elite that opposes the dictates of “quality.” Taste is acquired. We are interpellated by images and objects that enlist us in taste cultures. But taste is also something that one can defy, just as one may defy an image’s dominant meaning even as one is interpellated by it. We can thus display taste through consumption practices that involve rejecting particular meanings that cling to a brand or image, either through ironic embrace or through outright rejection. We say more about irony and brand appropriation in Chapter 7.

Notions of taste provide the basis for the idea of connoisseurship. The traditional image of a connoisseur evokes a “well-bred” person who possesses “good taste,” knows the difference between a good work of art and a bad one, and can afford the “quality” work over the (implied shoddy, second-rate) reproduction. A connoisseur is considered more capable than others of passing judgment on the quality of cultural objects. Traditionally, “good taste” has been associated with knowledge of “high” culture forms such as fine art, literature, and classical music. Yet what counts as good taste is more complex. The German term *kitsch* formerly referred to images and objects that are widely regarded as trite, cheaply sentimental, and garish. Kitsch is associated with mass-produced objects that offer cheap or gaudy versions of classical beauty (plastic reproductions of crystal chandeliers, for example). Cheap tourist trinkets, seraphim-embossed gift cards, and velvet paintings are all examples of kitsch. In his 1939 essay “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” the American art critic Clement Greenberg argued that, unlike avant-garde art, which

is about form and innovation, kitsch is formulaic, offering cheap and inauthentic design, often in the form of copies, to provoke emotions such as awe, wonder, and crude sentimentality in the uneducated consumer. Kitsch, he claims, maintains the status quo: it “keeps a dictator in closer contact with the soul of the people.” He contrasts kitsch to the serious, high modernist, nonobjective art of the avant-garde, a form that requires the viewer’s active, reflective, educated engagement.⁷ Greenberg later revised his definition of kitsch, associating it with educated middle-brow taste. Art critic Jonathan Jones notes that to define the term, which has been used since the 1920s, is to enter a hall of mirrors, because one person’s kitsch is another’s beautiful object. “How can we talk about it without revealing layers of snobbery?” he asks.⁸

Kitsch can be complex in relation to the politics of memory. In the United States, many of the consumer commemorative objects that have been sold in the wake of national traumas such as the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and the 9/11 terrorist attacks are kitsch in that they sell prepackaged emotions and sentiments without any indication of the political complexity of these traumatic events.⁹ Teddy bears, snow globes, and other souvenirs address consumers within a limited emotional realm (including sympathy, comfort, innocence, and the reassurance of cuteness). Yet memory kitsch can take many different registers, including an ironic and bemused recoding of historical icons and objects that allows for an engagement with history. This has been the case, in particular, with kitsch objects sold in the former Soviet Union and in China. For instance, the Cultural Revolution has become fodder for a thriving tourist trade in Beijing, with street vendors selling cheap knockoffs of Cultural Revolution objects (bags, hats, flags, etc.), and Mao figurines and paintings proliferate. This kitsch repackaging of history can be seen as a knowing recoding of objects, perhaps one that makes history feel less oppressive.

The border between kitsch as ironic engagement and kitsch as trivialization can be tricky though. At Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin, for instance, one can buy coffee mugs and chocolate bars emblazoned with the signs of the former East Berlin, objects that make light of a site that was once very serious, where people were shot for trying to cross over from East to West Berlin during the Cold War.

Since the 1980s, postmodern artists, architects, and critics have revived the concept of kitsch to defy the austere aesthetics and universalizing values of modern art and architecture. For instance, a number of contemporary artists, including Jeff Koons, have deliberately played with the codes of kitsch and “bad taste” in their work, in some cases using scale to make a point. Koons’s *Puppy*, a 1992 sculpture, is a massive dog made entirely of flowering plants.

FIG. 2.4
FDNY teddy bear memorabilia,
2004



Standing more than forty feet high, the puppy is hardly cute or little; it dominates the austere white cube space of the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum, in front of which it sits guard like an enormous tacky Chia Pet. Thus, artists and collectors have reclaimed kitsch to reflexively parody, to appreciate and study class and taste expression, and to reject avant-garde elitism.

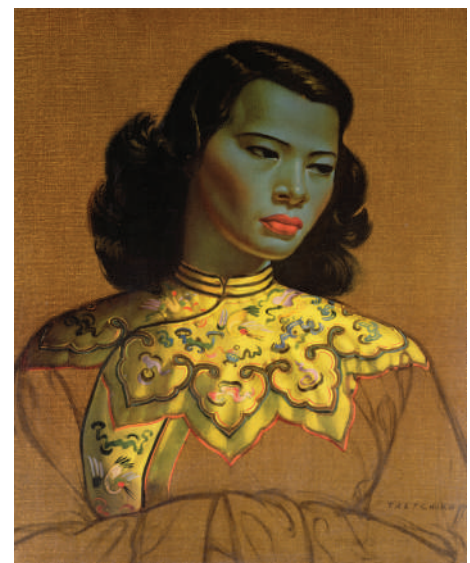
Kitsch objects have been used in art and collected, accruing value among those who knowingly embrace them, not for their intrinsic beauty or reflection of good taste but for their value as **repositories of historical meanings about taste and value**. A case in point is the painting *The Chinese Girl* (aka *The Green Lady*), which Russian artist Vladimir Tretchikoff painted in South Africa. This work, a portrait of Monika Pon-su-san, the daughter of a laundry proprietor, is widely known as the “Mona Lisa of kitsch.” It became one of the best-known paintings in the world when millions of cheap reproductions were sold during the 1950s and 1960s. In 2013, the original painting sold at auction to a British diamond dealer for \$1.5 million, three times the anticipated price. Previously, in 1952, the original was exhibited in a Chicago Marshall Field’s department store, where it was bought for \$2,000 by the teenage daughter of a businessman. She hung the painting in her living room during the 1970s, then gave it to her own daughter, whose roommates refused to allow her to hang it where visitors might see it. Years later, when her home was twice burglarized, thieves passed right by the painting, never imagining it could be worth stealing.¹⁰ The painting is currently on public display at a winery resort estate in rural South Africa.

Embracing kitsch aesthetics and the “bad” design elements of mass culture became **a means of defying modernism’s tendency toward elite, “high-quality” design**. Kitsch objects also gained value because they became recognized as **icons of a historical moment in which everyday life was saturated with cheesiness due to the proliferation of mass manufacture and planned obsolescence**. Objects formerly deemed “tasteless” were given new value as iconic artifacts of a past era when to acquire over time, say, a collection of fake crystal goblets (now called “Depression ware” or “Depression glass”) was a sign of keeping one’s head above



FIG. 2.5
Chinese communist ceramic figures for sale, 2012

FIG. 2.6
Vladimir Tretchikoff, *The Chinese Girl* (aka *The Green Lady*), 1952 (oil on canvas)



poverty. The contemporary educated connoisseur enjoys the ironic joke played by designers and consumers of everyday wares that masquerade as expensive luxury goods. In contemporary taste cultures such as this, objects are reclassified according to new scales of value. Hierarchies of taste and beauty are not fixed but change according to markets and contexts.

In Bourdieu's theory of social structures, all aspects of life are interconnected in a habitus—a set of dispositions and preferences we share as social subjects that are related to our class position, education, and social standing. Our taste in art is related to our taste in music, food, fashion, furniture, movies, sports, and leisure activities, which is in turn related to our profession, class status, and educational level. Traditional notions of taste were based on class distinction, so that the habitus of “educated” consumers was associated with high culture, and working-class habitus, for instance, was seen as vulgar, garish, or bad.

The distinctions between high and low culture have long histories. High culture was associated with forms such as fine art, classical music, opera, and ballet. Low culture referred to comic strips, television, and, initially, the cinema. However, in the late twentieth century, this division of high and low culture was heavily criticized, not only because it affirms classist hierarchies but also because it is not an accurate measure of the relationship between the cultural forms people consume and the class positions they occupy. The distinction between fine art and popular culture has been consistently blurred in late twentieth-century art movements, from pop art to postmodernism. In addition, as we have noted, the collection of kitsch artifacts, which are valued now precisely because they once were not, blurs distinctions between high and low culture. Furthermore, scholars of popular movies (and other popular cultural products such as comics) that were once regarded as low culture have emphasized the value of contemporary popular culture among specific communities and individuals, who interpret these texts in ways that strengthen their bonds or challenge oppression. Comic books and graphic novels, once considered to be for children or the uneducated, are now thought of as mainstream and cutting-edge cultural forms. Animated films, formerly seen as children's entertainment, are now one of the most popular and lucrative film genres, aimed at all ages and featuring the voice acting of top stars. It was once the case that university courses avoided popular culture—in British universities, for instance, even the study of the novel (as opposed to poetry) did not begin until the mid-twentieth century, because novels were considered “lowbrow” (a phrase that harkens back to nineteenth-century scientific racism, which we discuss in Chapter 9, that interpreted the height of one's brow as an indication of one's intelligence). The study of popular culture and visual culture in all its forms is now integral to university and high school curricula because of the now-widespread belief that we cannot understand a culture without analyzing its production and consumption of all forms of culture.

Bourdieu's model of analysis is class-stratified in ways that are specific to what he perceived as a largely homogeneous native French population when he collected

his survey data in the mid-1960s. Bourdieu identified different forms of capital in addition to economic capital (material wealth and access to material goods), including social capital (who you know, your social networks and the opportunities they provide you), symbolic capital (prestige, celebrity, honors), and cultural capital (the forms of cultural knowledge that give a person social advantages). Cultural capital can come in the form of rare taste, connoisseurship, and a competence in deciphering cultural relations and artifacts. It is accumulated, according to Bourdieu, through education, privileged family contexts, and long processes of inculcation. Yet Bourdieu's idea that taste and cultural capital trickle down from the upper, educated classes to the lower, less educated classes does not account for valued cultural forms that began as the expression of a marginalized culture or class, such as jazz in the 1920s and hip-hop in the 1980s. In these examples, taste and distinction "trickled up" to more affluent, culturally dominant groups. Today, valued cultural knowledge, which we may refer to as "cultural capital," is often found in youth culture and alternative forms such as street art (in which social mobility, political knowledge, and taste are not driven by wealth and class) rather than in high-culture institutions like museums.

Furthermore, notions of high and low culture do not help us to understand the particular patterns of minority, immigrant, or countercultural values and distinction. Cultural values and tastes may trickle up or may develop differently among members of a politically and culturally minoritized diaspora, and cultural values and tastes move in a variety of directions. Taste is also influenced by globalization in media, design, and brand markets. Images and objects circulate within and across social strata, cultural categories, and geographical distances with speed and ease, so that youth fashion, styles, and taste in Central Asia and North America may be very similar despite these groups being separated by geographic distances and political differences. The globalization of manga (a style of Japanese comics) is an example of this phenomenon in which taste and distinction are forged in ways that do not conform to traditional notions of taste distinction.

This shift away from the high-low culture binary can be seen in the movement of street artists into the art world. Shepard Fairey, a world-renowned street artist, emerged from the mid-1990s skateboarding scene to achieve early cult status with his "Andre the Giant Has a Posse" sticker campaign featuring images that depicted the famous wrestler underscored with the word "OBEY," a graphic designed to critique advertising's ubiquitous demand for brand loyalty.

FIG. 2.7

Shepard Fairey, Obey Giant logo



Fairey is now himself a brand, moving fluidly between street art (which gives him a certain cultural “cred”), museum exhibitions, political posters, and his own clothing line, Obey Giant (sold with the slogan “manufacturing dissent since 1989”). Fairey represents a new kind of cultural producer, simultaneously at home with entrepreneurship, progressive cultural politics, the street, and the museum, transcending traditional distinctions of high and low.

Value, Collecting, and Institutional Critique

What gives an image social value? Images do not have value in and of themselves; they are awarded different kinds of value—monetary, social, and political—in particular social contexts. Over the last few decades we have seen the art market reach an unprecedented valuing of art, as wealthy people have invested in art to anonymously stash capital away. Simultaneously, digital media has shifted the status of original images such that images are increasingly valued in relation to how quickly and how far they circulate.

In the art market, the value of a work of art is determined by economic factors, such as the role played by collecting in global capital, and cultural factors, including the valuing of artists through galleries, museums, and auction houses. The collecting of art by wealthy private collectors and by institutions supported through private philanthropy has long been central to the valuing of art. Not only does collecting create a market for art to be traded, it also creates a financial context in which work can be acquired and held in hopes that it will appreciate over time. The art market hinges on investment strategies, which rely on knowledge and predictions of changes in taste and aesthetic value.

The collecting of art for economic and cultural capital has a long history. This mid-seventeenth-century painting by David Teniers the Younger portrays military commander and patron of the arts Archduke Leopold Wilhelm of Austria. The archduke stands amidst his personal collection in a gallery in the Netherlands where, during his tenure as imperial leader, he amassed a vast collection of European works. This painting is an early visual “catalogue” of an art collection. In this image, Teniers illustrates the collection and at the same time affirms the archduke’s status not only as an imperial ruler but also as a man of taste, a collector of fine art. The framing makes the room seem vast, and the vibrant and detailed renderings of the paintings within the painting make the black-robed men in the room seem like diminutive silhouettes. This painting thus functions as a catalogue of the archduke’s collection, evidence of its value, but also an affirmation of the archduke’s importance as a connoisseur, a status that signifies his political power.

Ownership is a key factor in establishing art’s value and in establishing a nation’s political importance as well as an individual’s stature. We might consider



FIG. 2.8

David Teniers the Younger,
*Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in His
Picture Gallery in Brussels, c. 1650–51*
(oil on copper, 106 × 129 cm)

the many national galleries and museums and their vast collections, indicators of their world importance. The Louvre in Paris, the British Museum in London, and the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., are examples of national museums through which collecting and display demonstrate national

power through taste and aesthetics. The power expressed is not just symbolic; the works in these museums are worth vast quantities of money.

Over the last ten years, the prices of paintings sold at auction have reached new heights. In 2012, a pastel version of the famous 1895 Edvard Munch painting *The Scream* was sold by Sotheby's for a record-breaking \$119.9 million (to an anonymous buyer). After several other paintings by Paul Cezanne, Pablo Picasso, Francis Bacon, and others sold for increasing amounts, in February 2015, an 1892 Paul Gauguin painting of two young women in Tahiti, titled *When Will You Marry?*, was sold for almost \$300 million. A private Swiss collector reportedly sold the painting to the State Museums of Qatar, which have recently purchased works at record prices. This represents a current financial trend in the art market: the sale of modern art to collections from the Gulf States, China, and Russia, with art functioning as a new form of national capital investment in a global market. Increasingly, as artworks are valued as trophies of financial prowess and educated taste, rather than as part of broader, slowly developed collections, widely recognized "classics" such as turn-of-the-century European Impressionist and post-Impressionist works have become intensely overvalued.



FIG. 2.9

Paul Gauguin's *Nafea faa ipoipo* (*When Will You Marry?*), 1892, being moved at the Reina Sofia Museum on July 3, 2015, in Madrid, Spain

Beliefs about a work's authenticity and uniqueness, as well as about its aesthetic style, contribute to its value. The social mythology surrounding an artwork or its artist (for instance, of Gauguin as a romantic Frenchman who painted the South Pacific islands) can also contribute to its value. Paintings like

The Scream have become icons (and the source of many knock-offs and imitations), so that even a pastel version of the painting, if confirmed to have been drawn by the artist, is extremely valuable.

These works gain their economic value in part through cultural determinations about authenticity. Much of the value of art collections is established through the artworks' provenance, including the history of who has owned the work and when it changed ownership—information that has little to do with the artist or the work's creation. Here again, we see the author's "producer function" as a shared and distributed factor in making meaning. The designation of authenticity is derived through provenance and the fact that a work bears the artist's signature and has been verified by art historians. The many revelations about the extent to which the art market is saturated with forgeries has made it increasingly clear that the art market has many different systems of valuation. In addition, as images are increasingly easy to generate and reproduce electronically, the values traditionally attributed to them have changed. For works that exist outside the art market, the value of authenticity is likely to be ascribed to an image's newsworthiness, social relevance, uniqueness of subject matter, spontaneity, and capacity to inspire sharing. There are many different kinds of values that we attribute to visual culture images beyond economic value, as we discuss in later chapters.

One way that value is communicated is through display. In some cases we know a work of art is important because it is encased in a gilded frame and placed

behind barriers. We might assume that a work of art is valuable simply because it is so carefully displayed in a prestigious museum, as is the case with Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, which is displayed in a gold frame in a climate-controlled room behind bulletproof glass to protect it from weather and potential vandals among the 6 million people who view it annually. The painting is valued because it is unique, but also because it is highly marketable and reproducible. The *Mona Lisa* has been reproduced endlessly on posters, postcards, coffee mugs, and T-shirts. Ordinary consumers can own a copy of the highly valued original. (We discuss image reproduction further in Chapter 5.)



FIG. 2.10

Crowds viewing the *Mona Lisa* in the Louvre

The practice of collecting and exhibiting art and artifacts involves not only different valuing systems but also cultural notions about distinctions between art and culture. In his essay on practices of collecting, “On Collecting Art and Culture,” cultural theorist James Clifford maps the movement of art and cultural artifacts in relationship to changes in their classification and value. Clifford adapts the “semiotic square” (designed by semiotician A. J. Greimas) to map how certain objects (for instance, authored artworks in a museum) are valued as authentic and other objects are seen as cultural artifacts or “not-art,” for which authorship is unimportant. Clifford’s point is that non-Western art is devalued in the art world because it is designated as “culture” and that other kinds of objects (souvenirs, curios, fakes, and reproductions) are placed lower on a cultural hierarchy that moves from authentic to inauthentic. Clifford describes the collecting process as a machine in which everyday works of culture are valued commodities in the rarified fine art market, trading on their mystified aura.

Although the context in which contemporary art is collected includes dealers, galleries, fairs, and auction houses as the primary arbiters of taste and value, there is also a parallel set of practices in the collecting of cultural artifacts. This appears in the “culture” section of Clifford’s chart. These collections are primarily organized around notions of cultural authenticity. In the early 1990s, the anthropologists Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Taylor followed Gabai Baaré, a West African merchant who trades in carved wooden figures produced by members of his village and surrounding communities. In their documentary, *In and Out of Africa* (1992), Barbash and Taylor reveal the complex role of “insider” figures such as Baaré in the transit of “local” cultural art and artifacts to the global art market. Baaré and the artists who produce the religious

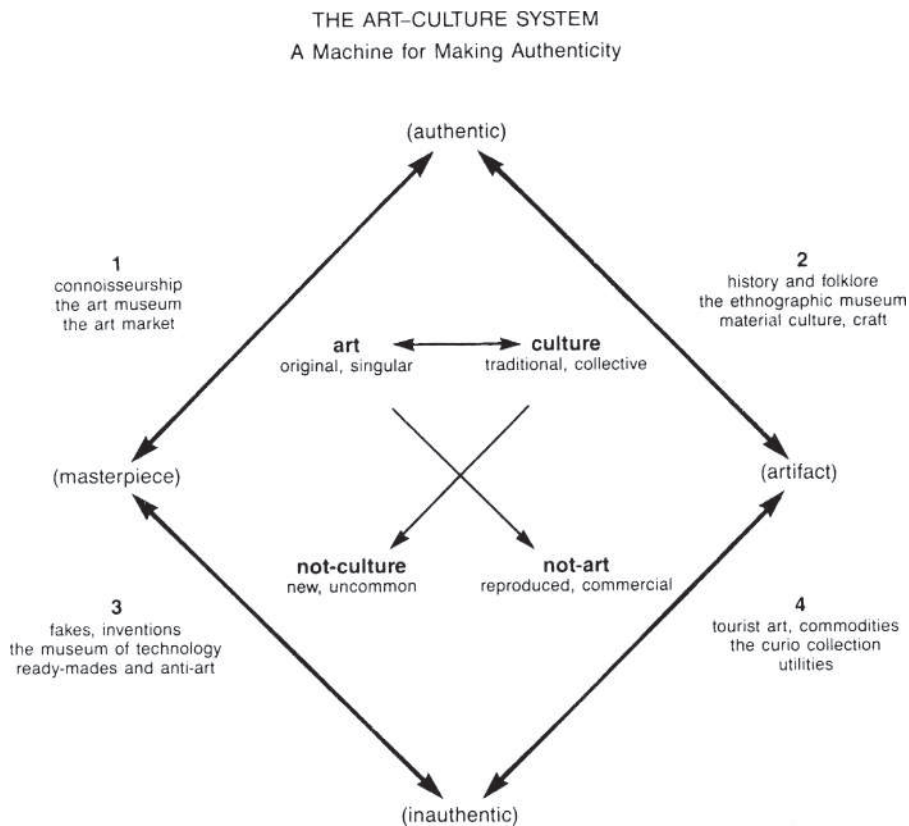


FIG. 2.11

The Art-Culture System, by James Clifford

artifacts that he peddles to New York art galleries and tourist emporia are not naïve. They recognize that the mythical meanings that Western consumers attach to their everyday religious and cultural icons can bring profit. Their products have, since the era of colonialism, included iconic “colon” figures carved by Africans, which parody the colonial European authorities and the connoisseurs who covet their “authentic” reproductions.

In the institutional contexts of museums and galleries, viewers can engage in a broad array of viewing practices of both art and culture. Some of these practices are in concert with institutional missions such as art pedagogy (for example, listening to audio commentaries or using a museum’s mobile phone app) and some in defiance of them (as when we move quickly through an exhibition, skipping



FIG. 2.12

West African carved colon figures for sale online at Colonial Soldier

over many works, or make ironic or critical interpretations on the basis of our taste, politics, or cultural knowledge).

Photographer Thomas Struth produced a series of photographs of people viewing art in museums to capture the complexity of these kinds of art-viewing practices. These photographs, which are normally displayed within a museum or gallery, give a sense of the varied responses that ordinary people have to art. Struth took these photographs in some of the most famous museums around the world, capturing images of people gazing at, scrutinizing, and walking past famous works of art. In this image, visitors at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, display a full range of responses to art—turning away, listening to audio commentary without looking at the work, looking at it intently, looking at other people. Struth created these images with a large-format camera and displays them as very large prints, effectively replicating the viewer experiences

they portray. These photographs give us a sense of the range of responses and expressions of taste that can be found in museums. They also convey, in part through their large size, the sense of presence of the large works of art on exhibition. Struth has remarked that art is fetishized through museum exhibition. He suggests that in this process works become dead objects, but that through viewers' interactions with them, they can regain some of their vitality.¹¹ At the same time, Struth's images point to the central role that museums play in designating which images and objects are valuable by creating the conditions (majestic, pristine, or gritty) within which art is displayed.

In the 1980s and 1990s, visual culture scholars and artists interested in challenging the role of collecting and exhibiting institutions in shaping taste increasingly critiqued museums. They proposed that the systems of value imposed by museums protect, maintain, and hide ruling-class interests in the art market. Some of these artists have made work that engages in institutional critique. This concept draws on writings by Michel Foucault about the function of institutions, such as asylums and prisons, in the production of particular forms of knowledge and states of being. One of the tenets of institutional critique is that institutions historically have provided structures through which power is enacted without force or explicit directives but rather through more passive techniques such as education, the cultivation of taste, and daily routines. Social critics and artists concerned with power dynamics in the art market saw the museum as a site where viewers could be encouraged to see the politics of the museum itself. Viewing practices, they realized, could be disrupted to undercut the idea of a smooth trickle of standards of taste from the institution down to the viewing public.



FIG. 2.13

Thomas Struth, *Hermitage I, St. Petersburg*, 2005 (chromogenic print, 114 × 144.5 cm)



FIG. 2.14

Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1964 replica of 1917 readymade (porcelain urinal)

Art that engages with institutional critique can be traced back to the Dadaist interventions of Marcel Duchamp, a French artist who radically challenged taste and aesthetics. In the 1910s, Duchamp took a jab at the veneration of art objects with his “readymades,” mundane everyday objects such as a bicycle wheel that he called art and exhibited in galleries. In 1917, Duchamp contributed a urinal, titled *Fountain* and signed with the pseudonym R. Mutt, to a highly publicized painting exhibition he helped to organize. The exhibition’s organizers were offended by the piece and its clear message about art’s value and display practices; they threw it out of the show. Duchamp subsequently became the cause célèbre of Dada, a movement that reflexively poked fun at the conventions of high art and art museums.

Dada helped to inspire many art movements that critiqued the art market system, including political art, guerrilla art, performance art and happenings, and other ephemeral kinds of art that could

not be commodified in the form of valued objects.

Many of Duchamp’s ideas about disrupting the art system were taken up in the 1960s by artists who examined museums as financial entities and arbiters of taste. For example, the German artist Hans Haacke, working primarily in the United States, looked behind the scenes at museums’ financial structures. Haacke’s conceptual works included a 1971 exposé of the business connections of Guggenheim Museum trustees, which he intended to include in a solo exhibition. The museum canceled the show. Haacke’s intention was to expose the financial structures of the museum, showing how its decisions are derived from financial concerns as well as aesthetic ones.

In the 1990s, some artists engaged in institutional critique by taking on the role of the curator to expose the invisible politics of the institution. To prepare for the installation *Mining the Museum* (1992–1993), the American artist Fred Wilson



FIG. 2.15

Fred Wilson, slave shackles displayed next to fine silver in *Mining the Museum: An Installation* by Fred Wilson, 1992–1993

spent a year in residence at the staid Maryland Historical Society getting to know their collections, their exhibition practices, and the community they served. He then “mined” the museum’s collection, resurrecting pieces held in storage and juxtaposing them with more conventional exhibition objects. Slave shackles were taken out of storage and placed alongside a silver tea service that had previously been on display. Wilson gave lectures and tours of his exhibition. By shifting his role from the traditional one of artist as producer to that of artist as curator and docent, Wilson intervened in the hidden politics of a museum that showcased works of material value (the silver tea service) and hid works that made visible the shameful, ugly aspects of southern culture and politics.

In another work, *Guarded View* (1991), Wilson displays life-size headless statues of museum guards, forcing viewers to ponder directly those subjects who are rendered invisible by the museum’s dynamics of the gaze. Whereas most of the guards in U.S. art museums are black and Latino, most museum patrons are white. This installation foregrounds the issue of race in relation to labor and museum marketing practices, asking museumgoers to notice the human presence of guards who are usually ignored when we focus on the art. By displaying the “invisible” figure of the guard, Wilson brings attention to the selectivity of our gaze, which readily excludes these underpaid, low-level employees who have always been fully present in the visual field of the museum gallery.

FIG. 2.16

Fred Wilson, *Guarded View*, 1991, installation view, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York



In 2011, the artist, curator, and scholar Mariana Wardwell (also known as Botey) was invited to participate in exhibitions commemorating Mexican Independence and the Mexican Revolution. Her contribution to the exhibition *Sueños de una Nación: Un Año Después* (Dreams of a Nation: A Year Later) at the Museo Nacional de Arte (MUNAL), Mexico City, titled *Herejías y Nombres Secretos* (Heresies and Secret Names), was a mixed media installation with three components, one of them a project in which the artist played the role of curator of objects as a kind of performance intervention in institutional meanings. As part of the installation, Wardwell had the museum move a large marble statue from the base of an outdoor column signifying Mexican independence into the museum gallery, where she also installed a critical juxtaposition of objects selected from the museum's archival collection, along with objects from the National General Archives. The idea was to comment on the archive as a source of hidden material histories of indigeneity, sovereignty, and independence and to make new meanings by changing context and staging juxtaposition. The overall installation offered an intertextual, intersensual collision of historical and contemporary meanings, staged carefully to coax the viewer of the installation to consider context, history, and institutional framing as factors that have bearing on the meaning of the work of art in its relationship to broader histories and cultures.

Cultures of collecting and display have also been radically transformed by the emergence of online collecting and exhibition. Artists increasingly design online galleries to display their work as well as exhibit and sell their work online through venues such as Artsy, where artists can display works for sale and collectors can browse museums, auctions, fairs, and galleries. The critique of institutional power in relation to display and cultures of taste thus have been paralleled by changes in technological access and cultural production. In this sense, the roles of the expert, the author, and the amateur are constantly being disrupted and reconfigured in ways that are usefully interpreted by referring back to the ideas of Duchamp, with his readymades, and Foucault, in his emphasis on institutions, discourse, and power.

Reading Images as Ideological Subjects

Taste is something that we may feel to be very personal. But taste is negotiated, not chosen. Taste is an aspect of a culture's ideology. Societies function by naturalizing ideologies, making the complex production of meaning so smooth that it is experienced as natural. As we noted in Chapter 1, ideologies are the shared sets of values and beliefs through which individuals live out their relations in a range of social networks. Our ideologies are diverse and ubiquitous; they subtly inform our everyday lives. As a consequence, it is easier for us to recognize meaning production in other times and cultures as ideological than it is to see our own meanings as ideological. Most of the time, our dominant ideologies just look to us like common

sense. Most primetime television series, from comedies to dramas, affirm values such as family, friendship, and individual achievement. These qualities may appear commonsensical or natural to most viewers, but they are specific to the era and regions in which the shows are watched.

The concept of ideology is rooted in the writings of the German political philosopher Karl Marx. Marxism is a method used for the analysis of both the role of economics in historical progress and the ways that capitalism works to produce class relations. According to Marx, who wrote in the nineteenth century during the rise of Western industrialism and capitalism, **those who own the means of production (the physical elements needed to produce goods and services, such as factories and raw materials) also control the ideas and viewpoints produced and circulated in a society, including its media forms and communication industries.** Marx thought of **ideology as false consciousness that dominant powers spread among the masses, who are coerced to mindlessly buy into the belief systems upholding industrial capitalism.** Marx sought to understand the ways that the capitalist system oppressed people yet encouraged them to believe in the system despite that oppression. His idea of false consciousness is now seen as too simplistic, as too totalizing and focused on a top-down notion of ideology.

There have been at least two significant alterations to the traditional Marxist definition of ideology that have shaped theories about media culture and looking practices. One change came in the 1960s from Louis Althusser, whom we discussed earlier in relation to interpellation. He insisted that ideology cannot be dismissed as a simple distortion of the realities of capitalism. Rather, he argued, **“ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.”**¹² Althusser’s intervention is crucial to changing concepts of ideology, as it uses psychological (and psychoanalytic) concepts to understand what motivates subjects to embrace particular values. For Althusser, ideology does not simply reflect the world, whether falsely or not. Rather, **without ideology we would have no means of thinking about or experiencing reality. Ideology is the necessary representational means through which we come to experience and make sense of reality.**

Althusser’s modifications to the term *ideology* are crucial to the study of visual culture because they emphasize the importance of representation (and hence images) to all aspects of social life. By the term *imaginary*, Althusser does not mean false or mistaken ideas, but rather how **beliefs are shaped through the unconscious.** He shows that representational systems are the vehicles of ideology. Althusser’s theories have helped theorists analyze how media texts invite people to recognize themselves and identify with a position of authority or omniscience while watching films.

Althusser’s concept of ideology has been influential, but it can be seen as disempowering as well. In his terms, we are not so much unique individuals but are “always already” subjects—shaped by the ideological discourses into which we are born and in which we are asked to find our place. If we are always already defined as subjects and are interpellated to be who we are, then there is little hope

for individuality or social change. In other words, the idea that we are already constructed as subjects does not allow for the idea that people have agency in their lives. Althusser's concept of interpellation says that ideologies speak to us and in the process recruit us as "authors"; thus, we become/are the subject that we are addressed as, believing that we have made ourselves as such. In his original model, the different modalities of interpellation and resistance that we described at the beginning of this chapter would not be possible.

The second rethinking of Marx's concepts came from Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, who wrote mostly during the 1920s and 1930s in Italy (before Althusser), but whose ideas became highly influential in cultural and media studies starting in the 1970s and 1980s. Marx's concept of a singular mass ideology makes it difficult to recognize how people in economically and socially disadvantaged positions challenge or resist dominant ideology. Gramsci's concept of hegemony has been useful for critics who want to emphasize how image consumers influence the meanings and uses of popular culture in ways that do not benefit producers and the media industry. There are two central aspects to Gramsci's definition of hegemony that concern us: that dominant ideologies are often presented as "common sense" and that these dominant ideologies are in tension with other forces and are therefore constantly in flux.

The term *hegemony* emphasizes that power is not wielded by one class over another; rather, power is negotiated among all classes of people. Unlike domination, which is enacted by rulers through force, hegemony is enacted through the push and pull among all levels of a society. A single class of people may "have" hegemony over another, but hegemony is a state or condition that is derived through influence and negotiations over meanings, laws, and social relationships. Similarly, no one group of people ultimately "has" absolute power; rather, power is a relationship within which classes of people struggle. One of the most important aspects of hegemony is that the relationships within its system are constantly changing; dominant ideologies must constantly be reaffirmed in a culture precisely because people can struggle against them. This concept also allows us to see how counterhegemonic forces, such as political movements or subversive cultural elements, emerge and question the status quo. The concept of hegemony and the related term *negotiation* allow us to acknowledge how people challenge power structures and effect social change.

How can Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and counterhegemony help us to understand how people create and make meaning of images? The work of the American artist Barbara Kruger, a member of the "picture generation" of artists, provides a good example of how "found" photographic images and text can be appropriated to make counterhegemonic messages. In a 1981 example, Kruger took a well-known image of the atomic bomb and changed its meaning by adding text. The atomic bomb image indicates a broad set of possible reactions, from seeing the image as an awe-inspiring spectacle of high technology's wonder to experiencing it

as a negative message about technology's tremendous potential to destroy. Images of the bomb indicate a particular set of Cold War ideological assumptions about the rights of nations to build destructive weapons for political power. In the 1940s and 1950s, an image of the bomb thus upheld the primacy of Western science and technology and the role of the United States and the Soviet Union as superpowers. Produced close to the end of the twentieth century, however, Kruger's version critiqued the existence of nuclear weapons throughout the world.

Kruger used text in this image to comment on these ideological assumptions about Western science. Her phrasing raises the question of interpellation: Who is the "you" named in this work? We could say that Kruger is speaking to those with power, perhaps those who helped to create the atomic bomb and those who approved it. But she is also speaking in a larger sense to the "you" of Western science and philosophy that allowed a maniacal idea (bombing and annihilating people) to be validated as rational science, as well as to the "you" who is reading and viewing this work—and you might be prompted to ask how "you" are implicated in Western science. In this work, the image is awarded new meaning through its bold, accusatory statement and red frame. Here, the text directs an interplay of meanings ("you," Western science today, the creators of the bomb). Kruger's work functions as a counterhegemonic statement about the dominant

FIG. 2.17

Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (Your manias become science)*, 1981



ideology of science, asking us to consider the multiplicity of both the producer or author and the subject(s) to whom its message is addressed.

When thinking about ideologies and how they function, it is important to keep in mind the complicated interactions of belief systems and what different viewers bring to their experiences. If we give too much weight to a dominant ideology, we risk portraying viewers as cultural dupes who can be “force-fed” ideas and values. At the same time, if we overemphasize the potential array of interpretations and uses that viewers can make of any given image, we imply that viewers have the power to interpret images any way they want and that all of these interpretations will be equally meaningful in their social world. In this perspective, we would lose any sense of dominant power and its attempt to organize our ways of looking. Image meanings are created in a complex relationship among producer, viewer, image or text, and social context, and the negotiation of power is a key factor in that entangled relationship.

Viewing Strategies

How viewers negotiate meaning in visual and media texts has been a primary focus of cultural and media studies for several decades. While many of these theoretical concepts preceded the emergence of the web in the 1990s and new forms of cultural production in the 2000s, their key ideas remain valuable. For instance, cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall wrote a widely read text in the 1970s, “Encoding, Decoding,” in which he argued that viewers can occupy one of three positions in decoding a visual or media text: dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, or oppositional.¹³ Hall postulated that most viewer readings are negotiated, that we rarely read a text at face value and rarely fully reject it in an oppositional way. Recall Mitchell’s point that we may think of images as “wanting” something from us. The term *negotiation* invokes bargaining over meaning among viewer, image, and context. The image is not a stagnant object; it has agency. The viewer’s process of deciphering an image takes place at both the conscious and unconscious levels. It brings into play our own memories, knowledge, and cultural frameworks, as well as the image itself and the dominant meanings that cling to it. Interpretation is thus a mental process of acceptance and rejection of the meanings and associations that adhere to a given image and that make demands upon us through the force of dominant ideologies. The term *negotiation* allows us to see how cultural interpretation is a struggle in which consumers are active meaning-makers and not merely passive recipients and in which images have agency and are active forces in the negotiation of meaning and power, and not simply passive conduits of meaning.

French literary and cultural theorist Michel de Certeau usefully described a negotiation strategy that he labeled “textual poaching.” De Certeau described textual poaching as inhabiting a text “like a rented apartment.”¹⁴ One can “inhabit” a text by negotiating meanings through it and creating new cultural products in

response, making it one's own for a time, before someone else takes over and renegotiates its meanings, or before moving on to inhabit another text. De Certeau saw interpretation as a series of advances and retreats, of tactics and games, through which readers/viewers fragment and reassemble texts with as simple a strategy as skipping pages or using a television remote control. De Certeau described the relationship of readers/writers and producers/viewers as an ongoing struggle for possession of the text. This notion contrasts with the educational training that teaches readers to search for the author's intended meanings and to leave a text unmarked.

This negotiation of meaning is steeped in the unequal power relations that exist between those who produce dominant popular culture and those who consume it, even in the context of cultural production/consumption (or presumption, a neologism linked to the rise of prosumer capitalism in the neoliberal era). De Certeau defined "strategies" as the means through which institutions exercise power and set up well-ordered systems that consumers must negotiate (e.g., television programming schedules, Facebook's structures/rules) and tactics as the "hit and run" acts of random engagement that viewers/consumers use to usurp these systems. Tactics include everything from remaking a show in a YouTube video to using a remote control to change the television text or participating in an online discussion about a web series.

These negotiations make culture the complex and exciting terrain that it is. We can see this in aspects of queer culture, for instance, and in "queer readings" of texts that do not have explicit gay content. In the 1990s, some *Star Trek* fans produced "slash fiction" zines in which Kirk and Spock were drawn engaging in explicit romantic and sexual encounters. This subculture challenged the hegemony of popular fiction of the era, which contained few explicitly queer representations. The idea was not to imply that a "real" gay subtext existed in the series, but to offer reading as a form of interpretative intervention, not just interpreting but also remaking and transcoding a popular text.¹⁵ Transcoding is a process in which social movements take hegemonic texts or once-derogatory terms and reuse them in affirming and empowering ways. The term *queer*, formerly a derogatory label for gay and lesbian people, has itself been transcoded and reclaimed by the LGBTQ community as a positive label.

Bricolage is another term that can help us to understand the kinds of signifying practices that people use to remake culture. Bricolage is a mode of adaptation in which things (mostly commodities) are put to uses for which they were not intended, in ways that dislocate them from their normal or expected context. It derives from a French term used by anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss to mean "making do," or creatively making use of whatever materials are at hand, and it loosely translates to the idea of do-it-yourself culture. In the late 1970s, cultural theorist Dick Hebdige applied the term bricolage to youth subcultures such as punk, noting the ways in which punk youth took ordinary commodities and gave them new stylistic meanings.¹⁶ In the 1970s punks appropriated thrift-store clothing from

the 1950s, ironically commenting on suburban conformity, and repurposed household items such as safety pins. A safety pin, previously signifying domesticity (it was used by mothers to hold diapers in place), became a form of decoration that signaled a refusal to participate in mainstream (parental) domestic culture and showed disdain for the dreary norms of everyday consumer culture. Hebdige called these kinds of choices “signifying practices” to emphasize that the youth involved did not simply borrow commodities from their original context. They also gave these objects new meanings and aesthetic values, making a political statement in the process. In the terminology of semiotics, punks were creating new signs. Hebdige defined a youth subculture as a group that distinguishes itself from mainstream culture through style that is assembled by participants from various “found” items whose meanings are altered. Doc Martens, for example, were originally created in the 1940s as orthopedic shoes and sold in Britain in the 1960s as work boots, but they were appropriated to become key elements in various post-1970s subcultures such as punk, AIDS activism, neopunk, and grunge.

Hebdige wrote about mostly white working-class male subcultures. Since that time, subculture style (and analyses of it) has undergone many transformations, with feminist cultural theorist Angela McRobbie contributing much work about feminism, youth culture, and fashion as a participative practice and form of popular culture.¹⁷ Fashion subcultures continue to remake style through appropriating historical objects and images, making a political statement about class, ethnic, and cultural identity. In the United States, Chicano “lowriders” have long enacted style with modified cars, “lowriders” that are often named and decorated with paintings of Mexican figures and history and remodeled to both rise up and drive slowly for show. As cultural theorist George Lipsitz notes, the lowrider defies utilitarianism; it emphasizes cruising for display, emanating codes of ethnic pride and defiance of mainstream car culture. He writes, “Low riders are themselves masters of post-modern cultural manipulation. They juxtapose seemingly inappropriate realities—fast cars designed to go slowly, ‘improvements’ that flaunt their impracticality, like chandeliers instead of overhead lights. They encourage a bi-focal perspective—they are made to be watched but only after adjustments have been made to provide ironic and playful commentary on prevailing standard of automobile design.”¹⁸ In remaking these cars so that they defy their design functions and in painting their cars so that they are works of art incorporating meanings from Mexican culture, lowriders produce cultural and political statements in defiance of mainstream Anglo culture. The radical intervention of lowrider culture can be seen in the ways that it has been subject to policing. After lowriders made it a regular Saturday night activity to drive at minimal speeds (impeding traffic) down the main streets of cities such as Los Angeles, local legislators created laws making it illegal to drive too slowly on certain roads.

Similarly, skateboard culture, which has at various times intersected with punk culture and hip-hop culture, has spurred anti-skating ordinances and the erection



FIG. 2.18

Lowrider car at the 2003 Lowrider Experience, Los Angeles Sports Arena

of barriers that restrict its practice in certain locations. As noted earlier, power is a negotiation among people; images and objects convey agency in that process of negotiating power.

Subculture style is evident not only in fashion and hairstyles but also in styles of body marking, such as tattoos and piercings, which have become mainstream forms of self-expression in Western urban culture. The rapid cooptation of resistant styles makes individual expression through alternative clothing styles a complicated process for youth committed to independent expression and resistance to the mainstream values of mall fashion. It is increasingly difficult in contemporary culture to identify subcultures, as alternative and counterhegemonic styles are quickly coopted by fashion and consumer industries.

Appropriation and Reappropriation

Thus far, we have been discussing the negotiated process of reading, viewing, and consuming, but the negotiation over the meaning also takes the form of making. We live in an era when more people than ever before have access to the tools of image and media production. Appropriation is one technique through which old images and texts are given new meaning. There is a long history of artists appropriating particular texts of art or popular culture to make political statements and of viewer-consumers actively engaging with advertising, popular culture, and news media images by remaking them and altering their meanings. The term *appropriation* is traditionally defined as taking something for oneself without consent. Cultural appropriation is the process of “borrowing” and changing the meaning of cultural products, slogans, images, or elements of fashion.

In the 1980s, cultural studies scholars examined fan cultures as examples of cultural appropriation and remaking. Before the web created a forum to share images and video, fan cultures of certain television shows and series would meet at conventions, rewrite episodes of the shows, and re-edit episodes (sometimes on rudimentary video equipment) to change their meaning.¹⁹ Scholars studying these fan cultures often used de Certeau's concept of "textual poaching" to talk about how these viewers remade the shows both to change their meaning and to affirm their fan status (as viewers who were authoritative about the show, seeing themselves as more knowing than the producers). Most famous of these 1980s fan cultures is the *Star Trek* "slash fiction" culture described earlier, in which fans rewrote scenes from the show and re-edited episodes to depict a romantic and erotic relationship between the characters of Spock and Captain Kirk (the term "slash" connotes the combining of the two characters' names to indicate their pairing, as in Spock/Kirk). Scholars studying this kind of cultural production saw these fan strategies as "poaching" in that the authors "made do" with the original texts they appropriated, using them to make new scenarios that depended on reader familiarity with the original texts for their new meanings.

Artists seeking to oppose dominant ideology have used cultural appropriation quite effectively. This 1942 photograph by Gordon Parks, *American Gothic*, Washington, D.C., makes an intertextual statement by referring to Grant Wood's *American Gothic*, a well-known 1930 painting that depicts a white American man and woman holding a pitchfork before a classic wooden farmhouse. An iconic image, *American Gothic* has been the source of innumerable appropriations and remakes, some interpreting the painting as a sly critique and some making humorous commentaries on changing social values in the United States.

Taken before the civil rights movement, Parks's photograph is a bitter commentary on the discrepancy between the meanings

of the two works. The house that is the backdrop in the original painting is replaced by an American flag, and the white couple holding a pitchfork is replaced by a single black woman, named Ella Watson, holding a mop and a broom. The codes of Puritan family ethics connoted in the original *American Gothic* icon suggest that hard work will lead to proud ownership of a home, a badge of American belonging. But the black woman stands alone, a domestic who is paid to clean property she probably cannot afford to own in the segregated society of the 1940s. Ironically, she does not have the freedoms and opportunities that the American flag behind her symbolizes. By playing off the codes of the original *American Gothic* using a strategy that Henry Louis Gates has called "intertextual irony,"²⁰

FIG. 2.19

Grant Wood, *American Gothic*, 1930 (oil on beaver board panel, 78 × 65.3 cm)



Parks points to the fact that not all Americans are interpellated by the painting's mythic image of American values. As Steven Biel writes, Parks ensures that "the normative whiteness of the now iconic *American Gothic* did not go unrecognized and unchallenged."²¹ It is precisely the strategies of appropriation and bricolage that allow Parks's image to make a statement about social exclusion and inequality. In this first image, as in most Euro-American representations, whiteness is the unmarked category, defined as the norm and hence unremarkable. Parks's *American Gothic* marks race and in the process makes the viewer think back on the whiteness of the original painting. The remake heightens the meaning of the appropriation through its implied comparison.

Appropriation strategies have often been key to political art. A good example is the public art of Gran Fury, an activist art collective named after the Plymouth car then favored by undercover police. Between 1988 and 1995, Gran Fury produced posters, performances, installations, and videos alerting people to facts about AIDS and HIV that public health officials refused to publicize. One of their posters advertises a 1988 demonstration, a "kiss in" intended to publicly dispel the myth that kissing transmits the AIDS virus. The phrase "read my lips," which refers to the poster's image of two women about to kiss, is appropriated from a then much-discussed slogan in President George H. W. Bush's presidential campaign: "read my lips, no new taxes." In lifting the widely recognized phrase and placing it with images showing men kissing men and women kissing women, Gran Fury recodes the phrase. The appropriation gives the poster a biting political humor, making it both a playful twist of words and an accusation against a president who was overtly homophobic and denied the seriousness of the AIDS epidemic, with tragic consequences.

AIDS activists in the 1980s and 1990s used the street as their platform, specifically using posters, stickers, and stencils to spread their message in cities

FIG. 2.21

Gran Fury, *Read My Lips (girls)*, 1988 (lithograph poster)



FIG. 2.20

Gordon Parks, *American Gothic*, Washington, D.C., 1942 (gelatin silver print)



such as New York. In many ways, the proliferation of digital (moving and still) images on the web has replaced the role played by images in the street. After 2000, it became common to use websites and social media for activism. Yet there remains a vibrant culture of political graffiti, poster, and street art throughout the world.

In the early protests against the U.S.-led war in Iraq, the street was an important political site. In 2004, an anonymous artist collective in New York, going by the name Copper Greene, made posters in which they appropriated a popular iPod advertising campaign to comment on revelations of torture committed by U.S. soldiers at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Copper Greene (which took its name from the Pentagon code name for detainee operations in Iraq) created a new set of meanings by combining the graphic style of the iPod ad campaign with leaked photographs then in wide media circulation revealing torture conducted by personnel of the United States Army and the Central Intelligence Agency upon Iraqi prisoners inside Abu Ghraib, the Baghdad central prison. The iPod graphic of a person wearing earbuds was combined with a photograph of a man standing hooded on a box with electrical wires attached to his hands, and the slogan “iPod: 10,000 songs in your pocket” was replaced with

the tagline “iRaq: 10,000 volts in your pocket, guilty or innocent.” In placing these posters near and even within actual

iPod ads, Copper Greene succeeded in subtly getting pedestrians to do double takes. The combination critiqued not only the use of torture in military prisons but also the dominance of individualized consumer media culture. The white wires of the iPod advertising campaign became the electric wires of torture, critiquing the way in which iPod culture (with headphones that shut us off from surrounding environments) reflects an insular consumer culture, one that allowed U.S. citizens to disavow the war and their complicity in it. Copper Greene’s campaign affirms that the street remains a site of contested intents and meanings.

It is not incidental that the Copper Greene campaign had a second life online after the city and the Metropolitan Transit Authority took down the posters. Photographs of the iRaq/iPod poster, some of them showing the image inserted into iPod billboards, circulated online, and the poster was eventually included

FIG. 2.22

iRaq, poster by Copper Greene, 2004



in an art book about the design of dissent.²² The image thus continues to resonate on the online “street,” gaining a global audience, just as the Abu Ghraib images, remade in political graphics, were circulated widely.

Appropriation is not always an oppositional practice. The study of fan cultures has been critiqued precisely because it is often difficult to ascertain what counts as “resistant” when producers incorporate fan ideas back into their product lines and shows. In an age when marketers are actively incorporating user feedback and information from algorithms that track user tastes and preferences, the appropriation of alternative cultures and subcultures by mainstream producers and fashion designers has never been faster. As Thomas Frank has written, the appropriation of alternative, marginal, and resistant cultures into the mainstream began in the 1960s with advertisers’ appropriation of countercultural language and images.²³ The circulation of visual and media texts from the counterhegemonic to the hegemonic happens at increasing speed, which places more innovation demands on alternative and resistant cultures.

The earlier fan productions were the predecessor to what would become a much more significant cultural trend with the rise of online platforms that allow Internet users to create their own websites; use cameras to create streaming video; rework and remake television episodes, ads, and news images; and parody media and popular culture. As we discuss further in Chapter 8, in contemporary culture the remake is a key cultural strategy that proliferates across styles and political positions. Much of “amateur” cultural production is playful and humorous, with little social or political critique. These image cultures circulate largely through social networks in which people recommend videos to their friends via email and social networking sites such as Facebook and in which online media sites such as YouTube recommend videos to viewers. In these online contexts, users are increasingly deploying images (often uploading images daily from their mobile phones) to define their public profiles and construct their identities. These social networks have also become primary resources for marketers, who use them to target networked, plugged-in youth consumers. As Hebdige writes in *Subculture*, bricolage and other tactics of subcultures are often subject to this kind of incorporation and reappropriation by the culture at large. Hebdige argues that incorporation takes place through commodification and through dismissal or othering. Thus, radical cultures are turned into mainstream commodities or dismissed as meaningless.

As this chapter has shown, cultural meaning is highly fluid and ever-changing, the result of complex interactions among images, producers, cultural products, and readers/viewers/consumers. Images’ meanings emerge through these processes of interpretation, engagement, and negotiation. Importantly, this means that culture is not a set of objects but a set of processes through which meaning is constantly made and remade through the interactions of objects and people. We have moved beyond the era of Barthes’s death of the author into an era in which we might

speak about the death of the producer. The new modes embraced by consumers as producers are about networks, connections, and aggregation—using websites, blogs, and social networking to link to their interests and friends. The viewer or consumer has emerged as the locus of creative production, as a curator who reorders art and artifact to make new meanings. Just as creative production of meaning was, for Barthes, relocated from writer to reader, so it has been again relocated to the viewer as manager, marketer, and bricoleur of visual culture's products and image-making tools. The viewer makes meaning not only through describing an experience with images but also through reordering, redisplaying, and reusing images in new ways.

Notes

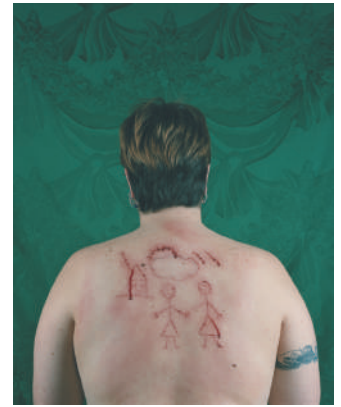
1. American Treasures of the Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trm015.html>.
2. W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 36–39.
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5. Nicholas Mirzoeff, “The Subject of Visual Culture,” in *The Visual Culture Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (New York: Routledge, 2002), 3.
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14. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xxi.
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19. See Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*; and Penley, *NASA/Trek*.
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Modernity: Spectatorship, the Gaze, and Power

the term *modernity* refers to the historical period during which a broad set of economic and social structures took shape, including industrialization, the economic class system, and capitalist bureaucracy. This period saw ideological shifts such as the ascendance of secular humanism and scientific reasoning, the safeguarding of individualism, and the cultivation of economic growth through investment in science and technology. In this chapter we examine how modernity was shaped and refracted through visual culture and visibility, specifically emphasizing embodied spectatorship and the gaze as modalities in the exercise of power.

Modernity

Historian Marshall Berman divides modernity into three phases: the Early Modern period (culminating in the Renaissance); classical modernity (the industrial and technological advances of the “long nineteenth century,” a period described by Marxist theorist Eric Hobsbawm as ranging from the start of the French Revolution in 1789 to the start of the First World War in 1914); and the high modernism of late modernity, culminating in the decades after the Second World War.¹

Modernity begins with conquest: after the 1453 fall of Constantinople (now Istanbul) to the Ottomans, Greek intellectuals and artisans (including philosophers, architects, and astronomers) fleeing Muslim occupation relocated to Western Europe, where they conveyed artistic techniques that had been introduced during the Greek and Roman empires. Sixteenth-century Italian artists and architects built upon these ideas from classical antiquity. This revival was the source of the Italian Renaissance (“rebirth”), a period during which the artists Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo worked. In the early eighteenth century, Roman copies



FIG. 3.1

Ancient statue dressed in a peplos in front of a 1930s diesel engine in the Centrale Montemartini Museum, Rome, 2007

of classical Greek statues were displayed in some of the first museums. Today, classical works and industrial-era relics of modernity are displayed together in the Centrale Montemartini, a museum set in Italy's first public thermoelectric plant, which opened in 1912 and was abandoned in the 1980s. The factory's machines were left in place. Four hundred ancient statues unearthed in the excavation of Roman gardens from the 1890s to the 1930s were dispersed among them, making the site a museum of industrial-era architecture and machines as well as works of classical antiquity.

This juxtaposition of forms of culture, scientific and artistic, from different eras is a reminder that from the Renaissance to modernity, ideologies about knowledge and progress informed both art and science. The industrial machinery that reached its height in modernity and facilitated mass literacy in Europe was first introduced centuries

ago, in the Early Modern period. Movable type and the printing press, introduced in the 1440s, made possible the wider distribution of texts, promoting literacy and authorship outside the religions and monarchies in which learned culture had been concentrated. This shift generated political conflict over the reproduction and dissemination of knowledge to the broad

populace. Classical modernity is associated, in its beginnings, with the French Revolution and the Enlightenment, a period of intensive focus on the idea of human progress, the harnessing of scientific knowledge to liberal humanist notions of individual rights, the linking of technological advancement to industrial urbanization, and the rise of industrial commodity culture and mass media forms such as the newspaper, the telegraph, and photographic reproduction. Late modernity (the late nineteenth to late twentieth centuries, with modernism emerging in the second half of the twentieth century) is the period we focus on most in this chapter. It is associated with the culmination and disintegration of most of the European colonial empires, the rise of cinema, and the rise of modernist art and intellectual movements. Modernism is an artistic, literary, and scientific movement, not a synonym for modernity. We explain this movement in greater depth later in this chapter.

Most scholars of modernity agree that these social and economic shifts, which took place over several centuries, peaked in the mid-to-late nineteenth century with the height of colonialism, the spread of industrialized science and technology, the movement of Western populations from rural communities into cities to work in factories, and the emergence of mass markets, mass audiences, and national media cultures. In the West, the technological changes introduced during classical and late modernity were linked to the rise of industrial capitalism, supported by Enlightenment belief in human reason, rationality, and the advancement of science as a key force in the quest for greater knowledge and power, as well as the justification of conquest and imperial expansion. Colonialism, justified as a mode of bringing progress to other countries, was a means for pilfering resources and labor as well as amassing an ever-larger geographic scope of power and influence. The potential to spread Western ideas about human progress and scientific advancement was used to justify the building of global empires.

Modernity cannot be reduced to European modernity, however. Modernization took different forms in the Global South, Western and Central Europe, and Central and South America. Scholars have brought to light alternative modernities such as the *modernismo* literary movement through which Latin American writers at the end of Spanish rule reacted against bourgeois conformity, naturalism, and realism, experimenting with rhythmic free-verse poetry and prose rich in symbolism, figural imagery, and metaphor. This style influenced writers in Portugal and Spain, reversing the colonial flow of literary influence.² Although the twentieth century saw many successful decolonization struggles, nearly 2 million people in sixteen territories still live under virtual colonial rule in the 2010s, and former colonies are still subject to domination through economic, cultural, and technological dependency and exploitation. Argentine cultural theorist Walter D. Mignolo proposes that colonialism is modernity's "darker side" and that its rhetoric appears not only in economics and politics but also in culture, including liberalism and its ideology of human betterment and technology transfer. This concept refers to the process by which industrial countries bring technology to developing countries, usually with benevolent humanitarian intentions (making the receiving country a more advanced place) but often involving a kind of opportunistic paternalism. Strategies of paternalism include Western industrialists looking overseas for cheap labor and new consumer markets in less developed regions and bringing these locations the infrastructure to consume media and products and produce goods cheaply without the workplace protections and benefits provided to workers under the laws of the country in which the corporation is based.³

Modernity's changes thus brought transformation on a global scale. These changes were not uniform. Technological change imposed on non-Western countries undermined indigenous ways of living, and modern colonialists extracted both natural resources and artisanal goods for Western markets. Industrialization in the West generated excitement and desire. Migration was spurred by the lure of industrial jobs and goods. But early factories were dangerous places to work, as are



FIG. 3.2

Lewis Hine, 143 Hudson Street,
New York, ground floor, 1911

many contemporary factories. And the new industrial cities could be alienating places to live. As Marxist historians of consumption have noted, wage labor produced alienation in workers for whom

activity was reduced to repetitive machine-like tasks. Once on the market, products took on meaning through a commodity culture in which factory workers were further alienated, insofar as they paradoxically could neither afford nor rightfully claim as their own creation the mass-manufactured goods they made. Workers sought escape in a new leisure culture that included movie theaters designed for the mass consumption of cheap amusements. New architectural forms included tenement houses (cheap apartment buildings) and settlement houses (charity institutions for new immigrants), structures that quickly rose up around factories to accommodate the fast-growing population of workers. One popular tenement design was the “railroad flat” or “floor-through apartment,” in which an apartment’s rooms were strung together like railroad cars, eliminating the need for hallway space, as seen in this Lewis Hine photograph taken in lower Manhattan in 1911. Windows were installed between interior rooms not for pleasure but to increase airflow in order to curb the spread of tuberculosis and influenza, which proliferated in the crowded, airless spaces of tenements and factories.

In the twenty-first century, we have come to recognize the long-term social and environmental impacts of industrial and technological advancement in the age of modernity. This concern is evident in contemporary discussions of climate change and the Anthropocene, the interval of geologic time in which humans profoundly and irreversibly impacted the earth. During modernity, however, industrialization and consumption were viewed as signs of progress, not environmental problems. The nineteenth-century political economist Karl Marx criticized industrial capitalism for its economic exploitation and social alienation of workers, but he did not predict the impact industrial development would have on the larger ecosystem. That impact became the subject of later critiques, such as that of Rachel Carson, the renowned American marine biologist who wrote prize-winning books about nature that were popular bestsellers. In her third book, *Silent Spring* (1962), Carson warned of pesticides' invisible but deadly effects on human and animal life, questioning the risks of scientific progress and calling for conservation and regulatory measures. In discussing the nineteenth-century cityscape now, it is important to recognize the optimistic modern fervor about technology centered on human improvement. Lewis Hine, the photographer who documented how poor, immigrant workers lived, criticized the social impact of industrialism on human life, but he did not make note of the broader environmental impacts.

Nineteenth-century life was organized around industrial growth, regarded as essential to progress. Increasing numbers of people moved from agricultural regions to cities, traveling on modern mass transit systems (such as trolleys, trains, subways, and trams) and working and living in crowded spaces. The built environment of the industrial city was a key signifier of this new form of urban experience.

The nineteenth-century cityscape included not only factories and tenement buildings but also grand new structures devoted to commerce. The cityscape of Paris reveals the historical ties between industrialization and consumerism. Cultural theorist Walter Benjamin referred to Paris as the “capital of the nineteenth century,” describing the city’s famous arcades, its glass-covered pedestrian streets and windowed storefronts, as the epitome of the city’s transition to a culture of consumption and leisure.⁴ As Anne Friedberg writes in her book *Window Shopping*, the arcades were part of an emergent visual culture centered on the mobile experience of eyeing goods while strolling past store windows, an activity that incited desire for factory-produced goods.⁵ As we discuss further in Chapter 7, the changing design of the modern city was integral to the emergence of a society organized around consumption.

The nineteenth century also saw the rise of large world expositions throughout Europe and North America—fairs in which modern materials and architectural forms were displayed as spectacle for the new urban individual. These expositions celebrated both modern technology and colonial conquest. In London,



FIG. 3.3

Lithograph of the interior of the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, London, site of the 1851 Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations

the opening ceremonies of the 1851 Great Exhibition took place in the Crystal Palace, a cavernous iron frame designed to support 300,000 panes of plate glass. Like other nineteenth-century exhibition halls, the Crystal Palace was designed for looking and being seen. The largest glass structure of its era, it was lit by the sun, eliminating the need for extensive interior lights to illuminate

not only its lush displays of objects but also its parade of visitors. Cultural studies theorist Tony Bennett notes that “one of the architectural innovations of the Crystal Palace consisted in the arrangement of relations between the public and exhibits so that, while everyone could see, there were also vantage points from which everyone could be seen, thus combining the functions of spectacle and surveillance.”⁶

The Crystal Palace also displayed the newest in technology and design, as well as goods manufactured in the British colonies for English consumption. By the twentieth century, many of these items, from domestic convenience technologies assembled by workers in British factories to opulent fabrics handmade by colonial subjects in India, were available for purchase in the new retail palace—the department store. Selfridges, a department store that opened for the first time in London in 1909, offered much more than just items to buy. In addition to shopping in the store’s 100 departments, customers could rest in a reading room, dine in a store restaurant, visit a special reception area for international visitors, and be served by assistants who functioned like curators, acquiring knowledge about items and brands and arranging inventory in aesthetically pleasing displays.



FIG. 3.4

Interior of Selfridges
department store, London,
c. 1910

The skylines of cities such as New York and Chicago are still dominated by architectural symbols erected during late modernity. Iconic among these is the skyscraper, a mega-tall glass building supported by a steel framework. Steel construction and the innovation of elevators began in the late nineteenth century and reached new heights by the 1930s with the construction of the Empire State Building. Some skyscrapers were designed to reference the machines of the urban factories that continued to churn out products until the late twentieth century, when factories were relocated to the cheap open land of the suburbs and then offshored to special industrial zones in the Global South. Towering buildings of forty or more floors, these skyscrapers were typically erected in city centers, the factories and tenements now pushed to the margins of the city. The design of Chicago's Home Insurance Building, one of the first tall structures to have a metal framework, was motivated by the 1871 Great Chicago Fire, in which most of the wood-frame structures in the city's central business district were destroyed. Skyscrapers rose up amidst opulent shopping promenades and department stores like the crown jewels of industrial wealth.

Magnate Walter Chrysler commissioned New York's Chrysler Building, the tallest in the world when it was completed in 1930, to house his company's offices. The building is an icon of Art Deco, a style that took its name from the 1925 Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes. Typical of the Art Deco style is lavish decoration with eclectic motifs. Architect William Van Alen designed the Chrysler Building to reflect modernity's excitement about automotive industrial design. The building's famous crown (fig. 3.5) looks like a Chrysler hood ornament, each of its curves a windowed hubcap. A stainless steel gargoyle was modeled after a Chrysler radiator cap. In 1930, the Chrysler radiator



FIG. 3.5

Margaret Bourke-White,
Chrysler Building, New York,
1930–31 (gelatin silver print)



FIG. 3.6

Chrysler radiator cap, c. 1930

cap itself (fig. 3.6) was an Art Deco design that referenced bird wings, suggesting that the Chrysler flies. The American eagle (fig. 3.7), signifier of freedom as a natural right, is combined with the Chrysler symbol above the urban industrial metropolis of late modernity.

Perched atop this symbol is Margaret Bourke-White, the prominent American photographer whose career bridged modernist fine art and commercial mass culture. She was photographed by Oscar Graubner, her darkroom assistant, as she prepared to take pictures from the sixty-first floor. Bourke-White was hired to document the Chrysler Building's construction. She also photographed a cityscape that

in its very design and construction inspired the feeling that industrial development is powerful and awesome in its reach. The photograph reminds us that photographers sometimes take risks to document change.⁷

The modern skyscrapers were not only symbols of this scope and reach of technology, they also turned the city into a place where privileged residents and visitors themselves could partake of this commanding view from above. In the late twentieth century, literary critic Michel de Certeau published an essay, "Walking in the



FIG. 3.7

Oscar Graubner, *Margaret Bourke-White atop the Chrysler Building*, between 1931 and 1934 (gelatin silver print)

City,” that became a classic in this discussion of the city as a site where power and authority are negotiated through embodied visibility. He describes the difference between the lofty view from the World Trade Center’s 110th-floor deck, which offered an illusion of all-seeing power, and the “pedestrian speech acts” of the street, where urban dwellers encounter each other and their world from the common standpoint of seeing things at ground level, eye to eye. De Certeau suggested that to truly know urban life, one must encounter it from a standpoint on the street, and not just from above, a removed position he associated with planners and bureaucrats.

Bourke-White’s commission, unprecedented for a woman, was given on the basis of her technically innovative and unprecedented documentation of workers in a steel mill. She is famous for many photographic “firsts.” Her work graced the first *Life* magazine cover, and she was among the first photographers to document the Buchenwald concentration camp after liberation. Bourke-White is also renowned for her documentation of workers engaging with technology in new ways, such as her shots of women using welding equipment on a World War II munitions production line. Many of her industrial photographs reveal how worker bodies become enmeshed with the machines they operate and the equipment they manufacture. These worker machine compositions can be interpreted through Marx’s notion of alienation. They foreshadow the late twentieth-century human–technology hybrid dubbed the cyborg to describe a condition of being that is both biological and mechanical, with the two inextricably entwined. The concept was given a new political meaning by the American feminist science studies scholar Donna Haraway in her “Cyborg Manifesto.” First published in 1983, this essay took as its visual symbol a Mestiza, a woman of Indian and Mexican heritage, who performs tech labor, spending hours each day wired to a computing device.⁸ Consider the image of Bourke-White on the Chrysler building, or her photographs of women at work with machines. Do they idealize the human–technology connection, or do they suggest the alienation and risk involved in the labor behind modernity’s achievements? In keeping with our earlier discussion about the fluidity of sign relationships and meaning, we would like to suggest that these photographs’ meanings are not fixed or definite. Rather, they have served different uses and may be interpreted differently according to both their historical context and their current uses.

Modernism

Late modernity (1860s–1970s) saw the emergence of modernism, a group of styles and movements in art, architecture, literature, and culture. Modernism entailed intensive transformation of visual technologies in the arts. This transformation began in the late nineteenth century, a few decades after the introduction of analog photography; it culminated, in the late twentieth century, on the cusp of the digital era. *Modern* is often used in an everyday sense to mean present times or to refer to contemporary phenomena. In relation to art and culture, the term has numerous other uses that add to this confusion, referring either to the Early Modern period (the fifteenth to

eighteenth centuries), modernity (the era of industrial expansion), or modernism (the art style and movement). Modernist artists broke with artistic traditions and explored new ways of seeing to keep up with and even lead the way in a rapidly changing world.

The art critic Clement Greenberg described modernism as “the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence.”⁹ Accordingly, modernist art movements such as Constructivism, Impressionism, Cubism, and Futurism broke with previous techniques and styles, aiming to match form and method to the ethos of progress and innovation that drove industry and science. Rather than using symbolism and icons, modernist artists drew attention to the structure and methods of their art. Artists identified with modernism tended to share a belief held by many scientists that work should be innovative, introducing new forms of knowledge and yet also revealing universal truths, often through experimentation. After the Russian Revolution, the Constructivist architect, sculptor, and painter Vladimir Tatlin designed a speculative model for a building meant to house the Third International communist government. Though never constructed, the Monument to the Third International design embodied the ideologies and aspirations of the new Soviet state. The structure was to consist of a tilted axis with a spiral metal exoskeleton enclosing three floors, each revolving at a different rate. The bottom floor was designed to hold a news and information center with telegraph and radio capabilities. The frame supported a huge open-air screen and a projector positioned to cast media messages into the sky. The aspirational vision of the new, technologically advancing Soviet state of 1919–1920 was thus embodied in a speculative design that defied architectural norms and standards of the era. The tilted axis and the decentered form not only symbolized a break with tradition; they also were meant to give new form to revolutionary praxis. For example, news and mass media technology is rendered as one of the three main areas of government activity not only in principle but also in building design, where it figures as the base.

Modernist architects embraced form and function, rejecting what they regarded as a bourgeois tendency toward embellishment. After World War I, the architect Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus (which translates as the house of construction or school of building) to design housing for the new German citizen of the interwar period, prior to Nazism’s rise. Gropius and his colleagues tried to make thoughtful designs for affordable and practical furniture and housewares for the everyday working person. At the Bauhaus, artists, designers, and artisans were invited to take up residence alongside one another to promote the flow of ideas among art, craft, and industry. Bauhaus furniture design is distinctively spare, using relatively inexpensive, newly available industrial materials such as plastics and steel rather than traditional materials such as wood, and dispensing with traditional decoration. These designs are unadorned, reduced to the look and feel needed for optimal function.

Yet Bauhaus designs are not exactly without aesthetic elements—rather, the aesthetic, which is quite distinctive, reflects keen appreciation of function. Consider

the spare, sleek Cesca chair designed by Marcel Breuer, director of the Bauhaus cabinetmaking workshop. This chair is still produced by Knoll (a company that became famous for its mid-century office furniture) and sold by outlets, including Design Within Reach, which in 1999 began marketing reproductions of modern designs. The Design Within Reach website is filled with quotes like this one from Breuer: “Mass production made me interested in polished metal, in shiny and impeccable lines in space, as new components of our interiors. I considered such polished and curved lines not only symbolic of our modern technology but actually to be technology.”¹⁰ The chair’s frame is made of a material that at the time had been used only in industry. Light and aerodynamic, it looks like bicycle handlebars.

It is ironic that this chair, introduced in the 1930s to make well-designed furniture available to the working masses, was listed for \$1,531 on the 2016 Design Within Reach website, placing it out of reach even for most middle-class buyers. Owning mid-century function-forward design, whether in the form of originals or contemporary reproductions and knockoffs, now often reflects nostalgia for modernity’s optimism about industrial technology in human progress. As journalist David Engber wrote in 2015, “the name itself, Mid-Century Modern (coined by journalist Cara Greenberg in 1983), hints at old and new at once. It lets us dabble in nostalgia while we maintain the sense of making progress; it helps us to recall a time when the future seemed bright.”¹¹ But lost is the connection to affordability and availability to working-class and most middle-class people who, at the time that these designs were first made available, often balked at the spare lines and industrial materials, viewing them as cold and impersonal, invoking work not home.

Many modernist artists and writers critiqued modernity’s devotion to truth and progress and its ideals of pure, universal design as a means to human betterment. Artists, filmmakers, and writers responded to modernity’s new industrial culture through reflexive irony, criticism, and even humor. Among modernists, the crowd emerged as a trope for the loss of individuality experienced in the teeming masses on the street, as in Charles Baudelaire’s prose poem *Crowds*, in which he observes: “enjoying a crowd is an art.”¹² In the 1928 movie *The Crowd*, director King Vidor depicted city living’s anonymity as



FIG. 3.8
Contemporary Cesca chair,
designed by Marcel Breuer,
1928



FIG. 3.9
Screen shot from the film *The Crowd*,
dir. King Vidor, 1928



FIG. 3.10

Screen shot of Charlie Chaplin in the film *Modern Times*, 1936

simultaneously liberating, threatening, and mournful. The film's protagonist, Sims, lacks social connection and community. This scene shows an office in which similar-looking workers bend their heads over identical desks. Universality and reproducibility are hardly celebrated. Sims's work is monotonous; he is paradoxically isolated and depressed in this crowded office, where he is designated by a number and his day is regulated by the clock.

Charlie Chaplin's 1936 film *Modern Times* comments on modernity and industrialization's impact on the everyday worker. Chaplin used physical comedy to highlight how alienation is produced through industrial mechanization and surveillance. At

work in the film's vast factory, Chaplin is swallowed up by the machine he operates. He is a hapless victim of modernity's new autonomous technology (a concept we discuss further in Chapter 5). In his trademark role as the tramp, Chaplin attempts to retain his humanity by fighting back against the machine. The uncaring and technocratic factory bosses blithely speed up the machines. The tramp is subject to a ridiculous number of automated machines, including a feeding device hawked by the voice of a "mechanical salesman." "Don't stop for lunch," the voice suggests. "Be ahead of your competitor" by machine-feeding your employees while they work. This scene follows a lunch break in which Chaplin's body is so caught up in the machine process that his muscles keep on jerking mechanically after he leaves the assembly line and he spills a bowl of soup. Chaplin uses humor to critique the industrial workplace's inhumanity: by extracting his or her labor, the factory destroys the autonomous individual, but it also produces a new kind of human subject, one who is inextricable from the capitalist machine.

The Concept of the Modern Subject

Chaplin's physical comedy stages a modern drama of the individual against the machine, an entity newly invested with autonomy and agency. But the individual is a concept that we cannot take as a given in visual theory. Instead, we must ask how the human subject is made over, reconstituted, through changes demanded by technology. Most important for us is the role of looking practices and visual technologies in this transformation of embodied experience.

We can trace the modern European concept of the human subject back to the seventeenth-century French philosopher René Descartes, who conceived of the human subject in the binary form of mind and body. Descartes turned

to the sciences and mathematics to establish rational certainty about the world and nature. He emphasized the importance of using measurement tools to gain objective knowledge because he believed that embodied sensory perception and empirical observation are not reliable means of knowing the physical world. Representation was key for Descartes. We know the world by representing it in ideas, not by experiencing it empirically through our senses.

We cannot do justice to the complexity of Descartes's wide-ranging thoughts about mind and body, optics, and the concept of images as mental ideas. For now, it is important to note that his thinking was foundational to the emergence of a particular model of human subjectivity featuring mental images as the basis of ideas (knowledge), as well as a model of physical space that we describe in Chapter 4. His concept of the subject was the basis of the Enlightenment notion of the individual as a conscious, self-knowing, unified entity with rights and freedom to think and act autonomously.

In the nineteenth century, several influential modern thinkers challenged the unitary Cartesian model of the subject. For example, Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, argued that the subject is governed in part by an unconscious, the motivating aspect of the psyche that is held in check by consciousness. Freud postulated that we are not fully aware of the urges and desires that motivate us. Freud's ideas about the unconscious challenged the Cartesian, Enlightenment model of the self-willed, self-knowing individual. Karl Marx also questioned the human subject's autonomy, showing how the individual is rendered a mere cog in capitalism. Chaplin's portrayal of the worker subject to the capitalist industrial machine is a caricature of Marxist alienation.

The French historical philosopher Michel Foucault, writing in the 1970s and 1980s, proposed that the human subject does not preexist discourses and practices but is produced through them. Likewise, power is enacted not by or upon individuals but through them in discourse, an institution's rules and concepts through which power and knowledge are forged. Foucault upended the model through which we understand truth and rights to operate. Take the example of law. Legal codes and standards in a given time and place are not fixed or universal, even if they are represented as such. Rather, they are produced through the discursive process of their interpretation and negotiation. Likewise, the human subject is produced through its subjection to the law. Discourse is not just words. It includes systems of classification and ways of seeing, including those through which we divide human subjects into types. For example, race is not a universal system of difference; rather, it is produced historically through an episteme's discourses such as law, medicine, education, the family, religion, and art. Systems of discourse and classification are epistemic: they are period-specific knowledge systems. As they are integral to political formations and power struggles, they continually change. The autonomous human subject is neither a fiction nor a universal truth, but is produced in an epistemic context in which a particular formulation of what it

means to be human emerges as dominant in a given time and place. (We further discuss Foucault's concepts later in this chapter, and the episteme in Chapter 4.)

Jacques Lacan, a psychoanalyst who built upon some of Freud's ideas in the late twentieth century, also critiqued the idea of the human subject as a unitary entity. According to Lacan, the human becomes a subject (develops a stable ego) during a self-recognition period in early development, between six and eighteen months of age. During this time, the growing baby comes to recognize itself in a mirror image, which may be the eyes of another (the mother, for example). This "mirror stage" is a decisive turning point in self-identity. For Lacan "the real" is a mythical state of nature from which we are forever barred when we enter into language's symbolic system through this linguistic-visual act of recognition. Our activity in the world demands a body schema, a mental representation produced through bodily interactions with others and things. Lacan proposed that self-recognition always involves misrecognition, insofar as the child is not capable of the physical autonomy it imagines itself to possess when it recognizes itself in the mirror, or in the eyes of the other. The human subject relies on encounters with the other to experience itself as an autonomous being. Throughout its life, the human subject engages with other people in ways that tap into this earlier misrecognition process.

These concepts of the human subject are historically specific; they are about human capacity, self-image, and the psyche in particular historical moments, rather than about the experiences of individuals in those times. These concepts of the subject are philosophical speculations about the limits and forms through which human beings can think and feel in a given time and place. Lacan's point is not that the perception of wholeness and unity is wrong or false (and therefore could be corrected or acquired for real in adulthood, when the body gains more control over itself). Rather, the ego forms through this split between self-recognition and misrecognition, as it seeks self-completion through others. The subject is, in effect, constituted and reconstituted, made over and over in life, as it looks to others or to objects for self-definition and affirmation of autonomy. These experiences always fall short, however. There is no past or potential unitary self, no experience that will make the subject complete—we will always feel incomplete and thus we are motivated to seek out others.

Many thinkers since Lacan have built upon this concept of "split" human subjectivity to account for diverse forms of political and social experience. For example, Heinz Kohut, a mid-century American psychologist, emphasized that vision is not the only register through which the ego forms. Blind children, for example, gain self-knowledge through touch and voice, with the mother a kind of "tape recorder" that acoustically mirrors the child back to itself.¹³ Giorgio Agamben, an Italian political philosopher of late modernity, has scrutinized the concentration camp to understand how the human subject emerges in particular epistemes in which political sociality is stripped away.¹⁴ The concentration camp is a structure that places some subjects outside the law, as the maligned sacred, while also subjecting

them brutally to the law's force. He proposes that we are all virtually and potentially living in states of abandonment by, or inclusive exclusion from, a law that is enforced but has no substantive meaning.

These contributions destabilize the Cartesian definition of the human subject as an autonomous, self-actualizing individual. Freud's concept of the unconscious shows us that the subject is not fully self-aware. Foucault's concept of power reveals how the individual is always constituted through power relations. Lacan suggests the importance of language, interaction, desire, and imagination in the formation of the self. Kohut emphasizes the importance of bodily and sensory differences to the experience of the self. And Agamben shows how law and politics form but also debase the human subject. The further destabilization of the Cartesian subject that was begun in modernity is one of the chief aspects of postmodern thought, which we discuss in Chapter 8.

Spectatorship and the Gaze

Fundamental to all of these definitions of the human subject is the idea that looking involves more than one agent, even when one looks at oneself. Since the Renaissance, looking has been strongly linked to knowing. By late modernity, looking was understood to be enmeshed with other senses (hearing, touching), even as looking and imaging technologies have proliferated. Looking is a complex interaction that often involves a technology on or through which we look. That technology might be a mirror, screen, page, billboard, or pair of binoculars. Looking also involves the cultural, national, and institutional contexts in which we look, and the world-views through which we understand what we see. When we look, we engage with other senses, including hearing and touch. The field of the gaze includes objects, technologies, and built and natural environments, as well as other people, who are either present and looking with us (or at us), or those who we imagine to have looked before or are looking simultaneously at the same image elsewhere, perhaps in a different place or next to us but on a different screen. When you sit at home alone watching a popular television series, you may imagine yourself to be part of an audience, and you may interpret the show in part through criticism and blog posts that you read outside the show.

Whereas in everyday parlance the terms *viewer* and *spectator* are synonymous, in visual theory the terms *spectator* (the subject position of the individual who looks) and *spectatorship* (the condition of looking) have added meanings that derive from film theory. The spectator's gaze is constituted through a relationship between the subject who looks and people, institutions, and objects in the world; the objects we contemplate also may be described as the source of something we call, in visual studies, the gaze. A gaze is, in one sense, a kind of look. You may turn your gaze upon objects, places, or others. Whereas a glance is quick, a gaze is sustained. In its verb form, to gaze is to look intently. The concept of the gaze has

been used in visual studies to describe looking as an activity involving a range of techniques. Looking away is also a technique of the gaze. Scholars have taken up “the gaze” to consider art, film, and media because these forms involve sustained looking. A gaze can derive from a particular kind of looking but also, as we have shown, from a visual text that encourages a particular kind of looking. This process is related to interpellation, a concept discussed in Chapter 2, in which the viewer is situated in a field of meaning production that involves recognizing oneself as a member of that world. Visual culture scholars describe the gaze as a field rather than an individual’s act of looking.

The concepts of spectatorship and the gaze were introduced to film theory in the late twentieth century to capture both the specific experience of looking in a given field of activity and the contextual framework of that looking—the history and context that are outside the activity itself but inform it. If we think about Foucault’s concept of power as always distributed and never simply enacted on one person by another, we will better understand this model of looking as always a distributed activity in a relational field.

The specific field of activity in which we look is captured in the concept “the field of the gaze.” Spectatorship theory has drawn attention to this field and its discursive framework as well to the broader cultural contexts that inform it. When we consider the “field of the gaze” in, say, a visit to a museum or a theater, we may take into account who is present, who stands where, what hangs on the walls, how the show is organized, and who is drawn or permitted to walk and look where—all within the “discourse” of museum culture. That field reflects its broader historical and social contexts.

Scholars in cultural studies, queer and feminist theory, postcolonial theory, and decolonial theory have examined looking as an aspect of power’s negotiation. Take the example of Fred Wilson’s installation *Guarded View*, discussed in Chapter 2 (Fig. 2.16). *Guarded View* makes the visitor aware of an artwork’s broader context. We know little about the models who posed for the statues of antiquity, yet here in the room with *Guarded View* are real guards, human subjects who are in the same labor class as the models. We are forced to notice the presence of workers whose labor is typically structured by dynamics of the museum gaze to blend in with the woodwork, unless we touch or move too close to a work. Wilson’s installation critiques the gaze, encouraging us to notice the racial, economic, and aesthetic politics behind it and the invisible labor that make the museum and the art market function smoothly. We may notice how low-paid human subjects are enlisted as technologies of the gaze, performing surveillance by watching out for spectators who might jeopardize the valuable art objects that signify state and institutional power.

The concept of the spectator and the gaze are cornerstones of early film theory because they are crucial to understanding several key concepts in visual theory: (1) the roles of the unconscious and desire in viewing practices; (2) the role of

looking in the formation of the human subject or the self; and (3) the ways in which looking is always a relational activity. It is very hard to study unconscious thoughts and feelings with clarity and certainty. For this reason, scholars brought psychoanalysis from literary theory into visual theory.

Theories of the gaze and spectatorship focus on address, rather than reception.¹⁵ This means, for instance, that the concept of the spectator is not about actual individuals and how they respond to a particular visual text (what they say about the work, how they act). It is, rather, about how a particular subject position is created by a visual text and its fields of looking, which are occupied by specific individuals. When we study address, we consider the ways that an image or visual text invites certain responses from a particular category of viewer, such as a viewer who identifies as masculine or feminine, or one who identifies with a particular political, religious, or national category. Address is structural and relational, as Althusser shows us in his concept of interpellation and as Foucault demonstrates in his concept of power. In contrast to the structural position emphasized in spectatorship, when we study reception, we look at how actual individuals make sense of visual texts, through such methods as interviews and surveys. Both ways of examining images, through reception and through address, are valid but are incomplete on their own. Together they can help us to understand looking by taking into account both the conscious and unconscious levels of viewer experience. Much of the theoretical work on spectators is concerned with how images and media texts position the human subject in its particular historical and cultural context—that is, people who look understand themselves as individual human subjects, not only in their own eyes and in the eyes of others but also in a world of natural and cultural places, things, and technologies that together make up the field of the gaze.

Foucault provided a classic example of the gaze as a relational activity enacted through a spatial field in his discussion of *Las Meninas* (1656), one of the most analyzed paintings in art history. Painted by Diego Velázquez, the leading painter in the seventeenth-century Spanish court of King Philip IV, *Las Meninas* situates its external spectator. By “external spectator” we mean the implied position of the spectator offered by the work’s perspective. Many paintings, including nonfigurative works, use perspective and other devices to situate viewers toward the scene or view the painting offers, whether the scene is simulated or representational. An easy way to understand this is to sit before a video game. Take note of the ways in which (simulated) camera movement situates you within the game world. Some sequences place you above or within the action; some shots offer the perspective of your player-character or a non-player character. Art historian Svetlana Alpers was among the first to note that *Las Meninas* offers a spectator position that is unusually ambiguous compared to that offered by other paintings of its time, which situate the viewer more firmly in place.¹⁶ She and other art historians have debated *Las Meninas*’s ambiguous external spectator positioning and its message about relationships of power.



FIG. 3.11

Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas* (*The Maids of Honor*), 1656 (oil on canvas)

Las Meninas depicts a room in the palace of the king of the era's most powerful empire. The composition shows five of the room's planes, including floor and ceiling. Paintings cover two walls. The figure standing before a canvas (fig. 3.12a) is believed to be the artist Velázquez himself, at work on the very painting we are viewing. At the very center of

the composition stands the princess, the Infanta Margarita. The attendants, the "meninas" of the title, hover by Margarita's side, looking at and reaching toward her. Their gestures and gazes lead our eyes to her as does her bright white dress (fig. 3.12b). Yet can the painter Velázquez really be so concerned about painting her? We see him looking not at her, but with her, at something or someone outside the painting's frame. Behind the princess, the composition is split. On one side



FIG. 3.12a

Las Meninas detail showing painter looking out of the frame

appears a door frame out of which leads a stairwell on which a figure is taking leave. Carpetbag in hand, he pauses to look back (at the room? the painter? us?). Next to this door hangs a mirror, in which are reflected two figures: the royal couple (fig. 3.12c). The king and queen face outward, like Velázquez and Margarita, toward the viewer. But because this is a mirror we can presume that they in fact stand before this scene in the same position before the painting that we are made to occupy as spectators by its composition. They do not look out at us at all; in fact, their gaze is mirrored back, and so perhaps by proxy we stand in their place. We might say the painting structurally thrusts the viewer into the place of the king and queen, node of power in this network of looks.

But many scholars, including Foucault, have debated the painting's organization of its various viewpoints in relation to the implied spectator position. In his book *The Order of Things*, Foucault discusses the spectator in relationship not only to the royal couple's implied standpoint but also to the looks of the painter and the child.¹⁷ Does the painting's discourse of looks really position the spectator at the front of the room with the king and queen? In fact, the painting was viewed for many years only in the king's chambers. Might we imagine our gaze to be returned in the figure of the man who looks upon the scene through the back door as he flees? Does his departure suggest that this system is not closed, that there is a world outside of the monarchy—and outside the painting system, with its formerly unitary spectator position? Another way of understanding this painting is that Velázquez inserts himself to hijack the royal portraiture tradition. As Jason Forago writes, by putting himself within the image looking out, the painter “photobombs” the image, disrupting the circuit of power that otherwise draws all eyes to the princess.¹⁸

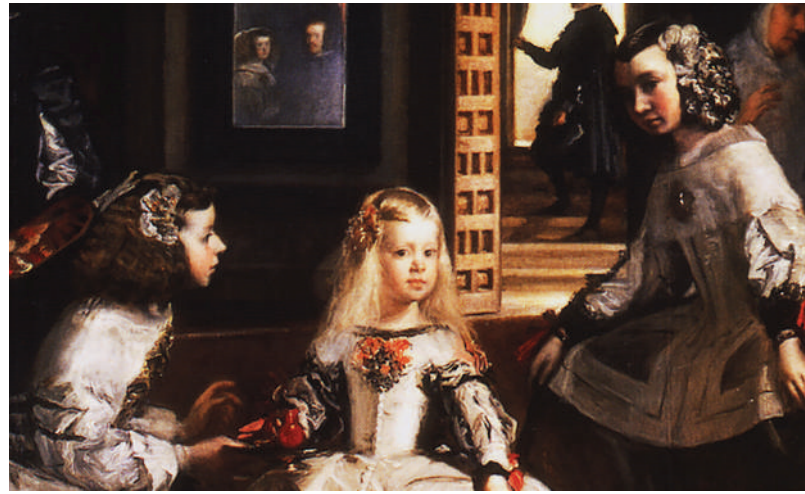


FIG. 3.12b
Detail of *Las Meninas* showing looks and gestures drawing the eye to royal princess



FIG. 3.12c
Las Meninas detail showing royal couple reflected in mirror behind the princess

Las Meninas can thus be interpreted as challenging the formerly dominant painterly system of aligning the spectator with an ideal standpoint. Velázquez, in this interpretation, introduced ambiguity and oscillation to the implied spectator position. This interpretation of the painting, though debated by various art historians, remains an important demonstration of the ways in which the gaze can be distributed across different subject positions and can oscillate, following different lines of sight, even in the viewing of a single work. The painting thus may be said to “speak” about class mobility and shifting relationships of power and hierarchy during this historical period.

Who is looking, and who has agency in the gaze organized around the images that circulate on social media today? The *Las Meninas* case points to the complexity of such questions. Consider the vast number of self-portraits, “selfies,” that are taken by users of smartphones today. Do selfies indicate a new kind of producer–consumer relationship, a new era of self-presentation, or a new form of self-empowerment? How does the fact that viewers are producing large numbers of self-portraits affect our understanding of the dynamics of gaze in this century? A selfie is not simply an image of oneself. It involves inserting oneself into a particular context or group and then, importantly, sharing that image on social media. The growth of Instagram, which was developed in 2010 and purchased by Facebook in 2012, is largely due to the popularity of practices of self-documentation and sharing, chief among these selfies. On the one hand, we could see selfies as a practice that promotes self-empowerment, with users taking control of their own images and activating their social networks through image sharing. On the other hand, we might see selfies as a mechanism of group

social empowerment in that people use them to activate social connections and networks. For instance, when people travel as tourists, they take selfies at particular locations and upload them to social media as a means of saying, “I was there.”

The proliferation and availability of technologies for producing selfies make the idea of owning the gaze and turning it upon oneself a viable source of empowerment toward different ends, ranging from group activism to self-promotion. Increasingly, selfies have become a publicity modality in celebrity culture. Certain celebrities have created their followings through the faux intimacy suggested in the selfie pictures they post to their social media

FIG. 3.13

Tourists taking selfie at
Acropolis, Athens, May 27, 2014



accounts, giving fans the sense that the celebrity figure is speaking directly to them, touching them, with images that appear on their personal Twitter and Instagram feeds.

Power and the Surveillance Gaze

Modernity is characterized by the rise of social institutions and bureaucracies instituted to manage expanding populations in the new modern nation-states, colonies, and cities. In the nineteenth century, leaders increasingly used visual techniques of classification and archiving not only to organize knowledge but also to discipline and control people and nature, sometimes in the name of efficiency. Classifying people by types is closely tied to keeping people under watch. In modernity, surveillance is one set of techniques used by institutions to discipline subjects.

One of the primary sources for understanding power and the gaze in surveillance comes, again, from Foucault. For Foucault, as we have noted, modern power is not something that negates and represses human subjects so much as it produces them. Power relations produce knowledge and particular kinds of citizens and subjects. In his book *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault analyzes the modern prison as a system in which power dynamics are relatively visible. Prior to the prison system, discipline entailed practices such as public shaming and execution. The use of force served as a visible sign of the sovereign state's power. The prison, Foucault explains, introduced a more indirect form of control. It was part of a new science of discipline that extended from the prison system to the military and education. This science entailed keeping people in line, and getting them to internalize and normalize obedience to the state, rather than using force, threat, or the spectacle of punishment.

The panopticon design is the classic example for explaining this new system's emergence. The panopticon is a prison structure designed by the English philosopher and social reformer Jeremy Bentham.¹⁹ The design features a concentric building composed of rings of cells, at the center of which stands a guard tower. This tower has windows and listening ducts that allow the guards to watch over and listen in on prisoners in the cells without themselves being visible or audible in return. Because the guard tower's inner chamber cannot be seen from the cells, inmates can never confirm the guards' presence. Inmates thus live in a constant state of knowing they might be under watch at any time, internalizing the guards' gaze. This image (Fig. 3.15) shows the Presidio Modelo Prison built on Cuba's Isla de la Juventud in 1928. The prison, a panopticon, was

FIG. 3.14

Jeremy Bentham's panopticon penitentiary design, drawn by Willey Reveley, 1791

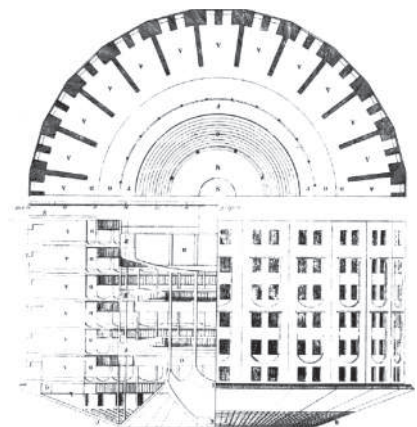




FIG. 3.15

Inside a prison building at Presidio Modelo, Isla de la Juventud, Cuba, 2005

closed in 1967; its buildings now serve as a national monument and museum.

Foucault explains that the panoptic system of power makes the guard a fixture of each prisoner's own thoughts. Prisoners are kept in line not by contact, force, or even a direct look, but by setting up the space of the prison so that each prisoner feels him- or herself to be always potentially under a guard's gaze. Having internalized this gaze, the prisoner becomes self-regulating and docile, even when nobody is watching. The panopticon reduces

the need for human labor. The prison is like an automated machine that produces the experience of potentially being watched at all times, even when nobody is watching.

This mechanization of the disciplinary gaze brings us back to the film *Modern Times*. At one point in the workday, Chaplin sneaks into the restroom for a smoke. An enormous screen lights up, displaying an



FIG. 3.16

Screen shot of Chaplin as factory worker surveilled by his boss in the men's room, *Modern Times*, dir. Charlie Chaplin, 1936

oversized image of the factory boss, who orders him back to work. Surveillance relies on the worker performing as if the disciplinary gaze is always present. Yet Chaplin resists internalizing this gaze. He tries to find a moment of leisure, despite knowing that he may be seen and disciplined. In the contemporary workplace, surveillance takes many forms, including online monitoring of activity and tracking production output.

An interesting aspect of contemporary public and workplace surveillance systems is that unless there is a crime or other grounds for investigation, it is unlikely that anyone will actually view the thousands of hours of camera footage recorded. Like the panopticon's guard tower, the security camera is usually unmanned. To be effective, it does not require an actual seeing subject. Today, confrontations between people and police are enacted in domains designed to foreground visibility. Police body cameras, dashboard cameras, and smartphone videos of police violence and protests proliferate. Security is a growing industry supported by the demand for military, police, and home technologies, many of which involve cameras and optical systems. In fig. 3.17 we see a guard tower attached to a scissor lift, making portable a police surveillance tower that is moved around New York City. In the panopticon prison, the subjects are prisoners and the position of the guard tower is fixed at the center of the ring of cells. With this mobile panopticon, the subjects may be anyone and everyone on the street, all prospective criminal offenders, and the guard tower may be moved anywhere and everywhere, making any space the prospective locus of crime. Like the windows of Bentham's guard tower, its windows are darkened so that it is impossible to tell if an officer is present or a camera is recording at any given time.

Tracking technologies also allow people to resist the pervasiveness of surveillance in our everyday lives. Consider iSee Manhattan, a web-based app that charts the locations of CCTV surveillance cameras in New York City and other locations. Users can identify routes by which they can avoid being filmed by security cameras. The public field of the gaze includes and even produces these kinds of countergazes and forms of resistance as people become frustrated at being under surveillance.

As we discuss further in Chapter 9, contemporary surveillance may also take the form of biometrics, a form of bodily identification and tracking that does not involve imaging per se, but entails automatic recording and tracking of measurable



FIG. 3.17

A New York City Police Department mobile observation tower, Times Square, May 5, 2010

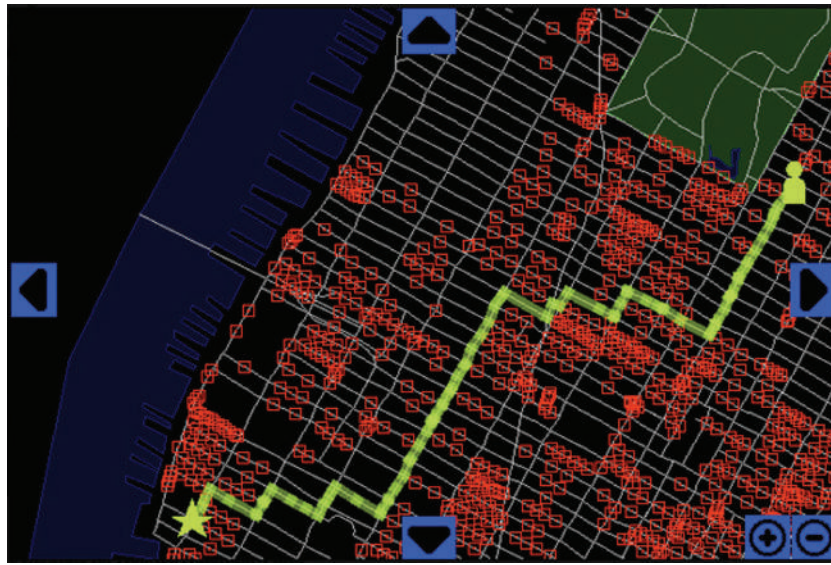


FIG. 3.18

Institute for Applied Autonomy, rendition of iSee Manhattan, a web-based application charting the locations of CCTV surveillance cameras in urban environments, 1998–2002

physical characteristics. Foucault proposed that the modern state enacted power on and through the body, as a form of biopower. “The body,” he wrote, “is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs.”²⁰ The modern state has a vested interest in maintaining and regulating its citizens; to function properly, it

needs citizens who are willing to work, fight in wars, reproduce, and render their bodies healthy and capable of these activities. The state actively manages, orders, and catalogues bodies through physical training, social hygiene, public health, education, demography, census taking, and regulating reproductive practices. In the nineteenth century, institutions began regulating the bodies of citizens through public health, a burgeoning mental health field, and the disciplines of exercise, gymnastics, and posture training. Photographic images have been instrumental in the modern state’s production of what Foucault calls “docile bodies”—citizens who uphold a society’s ideologies and laws by participating in an economy of discipline, internalizing conformity and improving themselves as a way to maintain the state.

Surveillance practices have historically targeted particular kinds of bodies and subjects who have been “othered” by the gaze. In the United States, as Simone Browne writes in *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*, there is a long and ongoing history of placing black subjects under surveillance.²¹ This practice can be traced back to the techniques used by slave traders and owners. From the layout of the slave ship to the organization of slave housing, and from the distribution of workers and overseers in the field to the use of books to track each slave’s daily labor output and posters to locate runaway slaves, surveillance was

a major aspect of white control over black bodies under slavery. In eighteenth-century British-occupied New York, slaves were legally required to carry lanterns at night so that their movements could be tracked even when not at work. In contemporary culture, power is less overtly enacted through direct acts of looking than through what Browne calls a “theater of surveillance” in which specific categories of human subjects are subject to heightened suspicion and surveillance. One example is the kind of racial profiling conducted pervasively by police, which means blacks are much more likely to be pulled over when driving. This illustrates the stakes of being visible as black in a culture prone to what Browne (quoting Paul Gilroy) calls “epidermal thinking,” in which discriminatory meanings are attached to skin color.

The Other

This discussion of the gaze returns us to the question of the human subject. Concepts of the modern subject find their origins in the writings of Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, the eighteenth-century German philosopher who introduced the concept of “the other” to describe self-consciousness as a component of the self-aware individual. Hegel illustrated this through a vignette about an interaction between two subjects. Each constitutes the other through a struggle for mastery. But there is a paradox here: the one who achieves mastery desires recognition, but the other, reduced to bondage, lacks the freedom necessary to bestow that recognition. “On approaching the other,” Hegel explains, the subject “has lost its own self.” The other becomes a vehicle through which the self is recognized.²² Through this dialectic, Hegel introduced a model for the emergence of consciousness as a power struggle.

Hegel’s dialectic has been an important resource for philosophers, political theorists, and psychologists. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels drew from Hegel in their formulation of dialectical and historical materialism, models through which they critiqued capitalism’s economic and political transformations and alienation of workers. French political thinkers interested in phenomenology, including Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Frantz Fanon, used Hegel’s dialectic to describe alienation in late modernity. In her 1949 book *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir describes the relationship between men and women as a political and sexual dialectic in which women are made to occupy the place of the other, and men thereby acquire agency and authority.

In his 1952 book *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon describes the relationship between white masters and black colonized slaves under colonialism as a dynamic in which the black slave misidentifies with the ego ideal represented by the white man.²³ Fanon’s interest in the black psyche informed the emergence of postcolonial theory, a body of scholarship that has analyzed how Western

discourses have constituted the human subjects of non-Western locations, typically former colonies, as lacking agency or voice. In Western texts and discourses about Africa, the Global South, and “the Orient,” the non-Western subject is typically rendered as an other—a foil against which the white, Western subject is made to appear as a savior bringing progress and development. Many colonial narratives represent non-Western subjects as vehicles of Western travel fantasies. Postcolonial theory has critiqued fiction as well as political history to highlight how Western subjects and nation-states have used the colonial other to forge and anchor Western identity.

The cultural theorist Edward Said emphasized that “the Orient” (South Asia, East Asia, and the Middle East) is not a place or culture in itself, but rather a European colonial-era construction. He describes *Orientalism* as a European style in which fantasies of “the Orient” are given a special place in European Western literature and art. Adjacent to Europe, “the Orient” is the site of Europe’s richest and oldest colonies and the source of its civilizations and languages. A historical site of conquest and pillage, it continues to figure as the mirror through which Europe’s image is constituted.²⁴ Said argued that the staging of “the Orient” as other established Europe and the West as the global norm. Orientalism is an ongoing ideology that can be found not only in political policy but also in cultural representations.

One example of colonial representation is the public expositions staged in Europe and the United States described earlier, the vast fairs displaying objects and designs from colonies, tribes, and protectorates. One of the most famous of these was the 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition, an event lasting six months that drew millions of visitors.

In these colonial world expositions, people were put on display in exaggerated racialized spectacles. In this poster, ethnic and racial types are rendered in graphics that exaggerate skin tone and features.

A similar logic of exaggerated racial stereotyping can be seen in *The Chinese Girl*, the widely reproduced 1952 painting by Vladimir Tretchikoff discussed in Chapter 2 (see Fig. 2.6). Tretchikoff’s color choice, which earned the painting the moniker “The Green Lady,” reflects an Orientalist stereotyping of Asians that can be traced back to the Swiss naturalist Carl Linnaeus, who described Asians as “fiscus” (dark) but later modified the term to “luridus” (connoting yellow, lurid, and ghastly).²⁵ The vast number of reproductions of this painting makes it a good

FIG. 3.19

Poster for the 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition created by Desmeure and printed by Robert Lang



example of kitsch's political power to make crude and ugly sentiment seem normal and acceptable.

The featuring of the body of the other in Western displays is prominent in paintings of the colonial period as well. A work by the French neoclassical painter Jean-Léon Gérôme is a case in point. The canvas offers a secretive glimpse into a bathhouse. Gérôme has placed the partially nude bodies of two women on display for the Western gaze. The class difference between them is made obvious: the black woman is a servant who bathes the white woman. The women are subject to different gaze dynamics as well. Whereas the white woman is rendered from behind, her face and breasts hidden from view, the black woman is rendered as a frontal nude, her face and breasts on display.

This Orientalist neoclassical fantasy persists in the twenty-first century. This 2006 advertisement for Keri lotion is an explicit appropriation of *La Grande Odalisque*, an 1814 painting by the French artist Jean-August-Dominique Ingres. Reference to Ingres's famous

FIG. 3.20

Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Bath*, c. 1880–1885 (oil on canvas, 29 × 23½")





FIG. 3.21

Keri lotion advertisement, 2006

odalisque is obvious in the replication of the model's distinctively elongated spine, her back turned to face the camera, and her head turned to meet the gaze of the camera/viewer. Framing and color choices, skin tone and quality, the styling of the model's hair, fabric draping, and the peacock-feather fan reference the painting.

Even in his time, Ingres was widely criticized for making gothic distortions of the human form. His decision to add three vertebrae to the odalisque figure, for example

(intended to elongate her spine for aesthetic purposes), was disparaged for making the body appear abnormal. Despite this, his painting is famous for its depiction of neoclassical ideals of "timeless" bodily perfection. By referencing the painting, Keri emphasizes that their product will make the consumer's skin radiate the same smooth patina, the idealized "timeless beauty of being a woman." Viewers of the Keri ad may take away the simple message that Keri lotion confers "classical"

beauty without thinking much about the painting and its meanings. Yet the historical reference contributes to a naturalized mythology of "timeless beauty" as white and Western. Timelessness is an idealized concept, one that appears to defy cultural

FIG. 3.22

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *La Grande Odalisque*, 1814 (oil on canvas, 35 × 64")

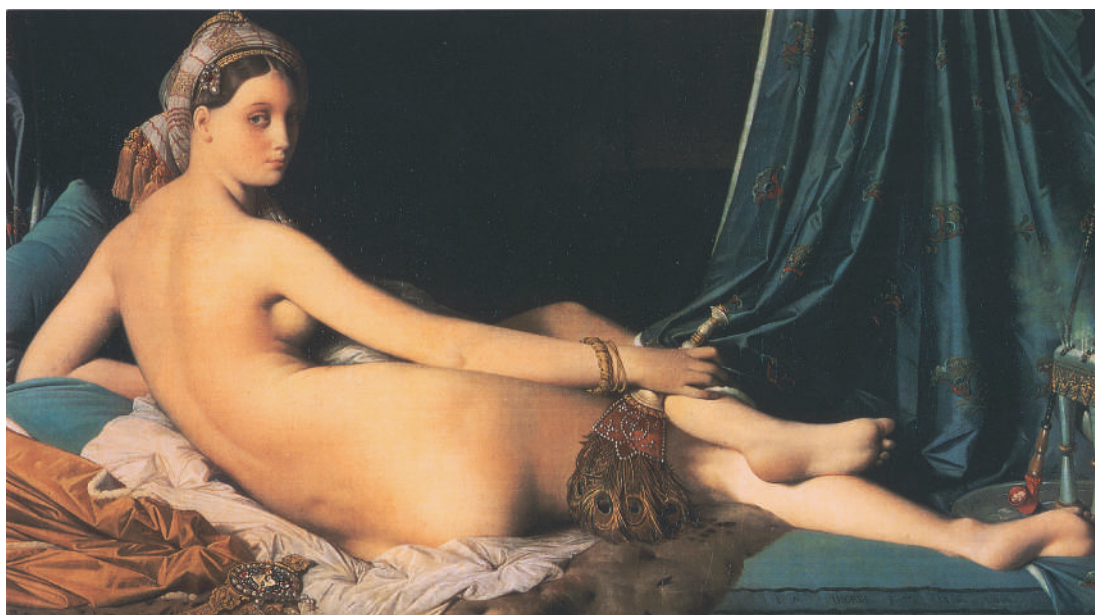




FIG. 3.23

Ralph Lauren advertisement,
photograph by Bruce Weber,
2015

and historical differences. Yet when we scrutinize the sources of this ideal, we can see how the legacy of the colonial other and its racialized aesthetics inform contemporary aesthetics.

The trope of the white woman in an exotic setting with non-Western women as props, as a fantasy of colonial-era travel, is also still pervasive in advertising. Ralph Lauren has sold its Safari clothing line for decades using colonial imagery. In an advertisement photographed by Bruce Weber, nineteen-year-old Sanne Vloet, a Nordic model with blonde hair and blue-green eyes, appears on a sandy beach in a khaki gown styled like a classic safari shirt. Real camels complement her camel-colored hair and dress. These animals serve as “Arab”-themed accessories, a reference suggested as well by the beach canopy, which is printed in a pattern that suggests mosque domes. Why a Nordic model in an Arab-themed setting in 2015? This strategy of mining symbolism of the Middle East as a source of otherness has become even more pervasive in the twenty-first century.

Contemporary representation of Muslims as fanatics or extremists and the representation of the Middle East as mysterious, unknowable, and sensual are examples of how current Orientalism reinforces cultural stereotypes that have their roots in the colonial era. The Showtime television network series *Homeland* is another contemporary expression of Orientalism. Based on an Israeli series (*Prisoners of War*) created by Gideon Raff in 2010, *Homeland* takes as its context the American “war on terror.” The series has been widely criticized for using



FIG. 3.24

Homeland poster, 2014

Islamophobic stereotypes that reduce Muslim characters to unethical brutes if not Jihadists, reserving moral complexity and character subtlety for its Western protagonists.²⁶ Islam and the Middle East serve as sketchy locations against which the American protagonist appears. A poster for the fourth season demonstrates this use of Muslims as other. We see the bright blue eyes, red headscarf, and blonde hair of CIA agent Carrie Mathison (Claire Danes) in bold detail, her color and expression set off against a gray sea of others, an anonymous crowd of women, each head chastely covered, each face turned away. Only Mathison shows her face, only Mathison is represented with complexity and detail.

Laura Durkay wrote in the *Washington Post* that the poster invokes a “blonde, white Red Riding Hood lost in a forest of faceless Muslim wolves.”²⁷

Mathison is produced as a unique individual by contrasting her with others who are granted no such individuality. Her pose bears a marked resemblance to that of the young woman caught in *Afghan Girl*, a 1984 photographic portrait taken by journalist Steve McCurry that was widely reproduced as an art print and poster after it appeared on the cover of *National Geographic*. *Afghan Girl* is widely seen as an iconic image of the tragic victims of war in Afghanistan. The girl’s eyes were described in *National Geographic* as “haunted,” revealing her fears as a war refugee. Wendy S. Hesford and Wendy Kozol call this image “the First World’s Third World *Mona Lisa*,” noting its rendering of the woman as “an exoticized Other

FIG. 3.25

Steve McCurry, *Afghan Girl*, 1984



onto which the discourse of international human rights has been placed.”²⁸ The photograph was the subject of a 2002 episode in the National Geographic *Explorer* series covering McCurry’s seventeen-year quest to find again his photograph’s subject, identified as Sharbat Gula, a devout Muslim woman living in a war zone. To confirm that the right model had indeed been identified, a photograph of Sharbat Gula’s eyes and face, taken by a female associate sent to meet her, was sent to a U.S. laboratory for identity verification. The photograph was compared to the 1984 image using facial recognition and iris-scanning technologies employed by security agencies. When the woman’s identity was verified, McCurry gained permission to see her in person. He again projected fantasies of anguish and need onto the woman, reaffirming her iconic function as the other that justifies Western humanitarianism: “Her eyes are as haunting now as they were then.”²⁹ Sharbat Gula’s devout Muslim faith prohibited her from meeting with and being seen by men from outside her own Pashtun ethnic group, yet her family made an exception for a brief reunion with McCurry. *National Geographic* reported that Sharbat granted that interview to let the world know that she had survived, but she then returned to anonymity, living in purdah (staying out of sight of men). Years later her image and name were dragged into the news again, when she was charged with living with false identity papers in Pakistan.³⁰

In the 2014 poster for *Homeland*, Mathison is rendered in a profile reminiscent of this iconic photograph. In both photographs, a woman wears a loosely wrapped scarf of a bright reddish hue. Both women look at the camera with a bright, direct gaze, belying the chasteness that the headscarf suggests. The *Homeland* poster interestingly reverses the concealment strategies that we see in Gérôme’s bathhouse painting. The poster’s composition and what we know about Mathison suggest that the female subject’s visual confrontation of the camera conveys her sense of freedom and autonomy as a Western female subject. Mathison drives *Homeland*’s narrative; indeed, her character disrupts politics and even destroys lives in the name of that freedom. In contrast, the Islamic female subjects who surround her are anonymous and faceless. The nineteenth-century painting *The Bath* confers anonymity and protection from the male gaze upon the white female body, in keeping with Western and Muslim codes of the era. But the black woman, perhaps an Islamic subject, is exposed to the gaze. Not only does she service the white woman whose body she bathes, she also services the Western spectator who may receive pleasure from the image of her partially nude body.

In the 2015 season, Muslim representation in *Homeland* was challenged on air through strategies that we may describe as countervisuality or media hacktivism. *Homeland*’s producers hired graffiti artists to add authenticity to a set depicting a Syrian refugee camp on the outskirts of Berlin. Realizing that the producers did not read Arabic, the artists wrote slogans subverting the show’s Orientalist message. They wrote in Arabic phrases such as “Homeland is NOT a series,” “Homeland is racist,” “Homeland is a joke and it didn’t make us laugh,” and “Black lives matter.”



FIG. 3.26

Graffiti on *Homeland* set by The Arabian Street Artists (Heba Amin @hebamin, Caram Kapp @dot_seekay, Don Karl aka Stone @Donrok). (A) There is no Homeland (mafeesh Homeland); (B) #blacklivesmatter

The show's producers became aware of the content after the episode aired and literate viewers noticed the hack. The artists involved include the artist and professor Heba Amin, the graphic designer Caram Kapp, and Don Karl (aka Stone), a graffiti artist who had collaborated on *Walls of Freedom*, a book about Egyptian Revolution street art. The group later revealed their identities and intentions, maintaining that the show presents the Arab world as a dangerous

phantasm: "In [the show's producers'] eyes, Arabic script is merely a supplementary visual that completes the horror-fantasy of the Middle East, a poster image dehumanising an entire region to human-less figures in black burkas."³¹

Gender and the Gaze

Gender and sexuality studies scholars have most fully developed twentieth-century concepts of the gaze in ways that help us to interpret the politics of visibility and countervisuality in examples such as these. Psychoanalysis has played an important role in the understanding of spectatorship and the unconscious processes supporting looking practices. Psychoanalytic theories of spectatorship, which were very influential in the late twentieth century, are speculative theories about how the film image and visual narrative offer particular positions of pleasure and power to the spectator.

As a theory based on the idea that we are guided by unconscious feelings and drives we don't fully understand, psychoanalysis was used by late twentieth-century film theorists to understand the unconscious aspects of cinematic spectatorship. According to psychoanalytic theory, to function in our lives, we actively repress various desires, fears, memories, and fantasies. Beneath consciousness, there exists a dynamic, active realm of desire that is inaccessible to our rational and logical selves. The unconscious is particularly active in representational activities such as dreaming. Spectatorship theories are based on the idea that responses to film are in part unconscious, with cinematic texts prompting emotions, memories, and

fantasies. Films and images are an interface through which we may work through the otherwise unknowable unconscious realm.

Film theorists such as Christian Metz focused not only on the film image and the narrative form of a film but also on the different components of film experience: the social space of the cinema and its field of the gaze include the darkened theater where viewers sit together, the projector behind our heads, the large screen onto which the film image is projected, and the technology of sound. Metz and others emphasized that all of these elements, captured in the concept of the cinematic apparatus, make up the experience of engaging with films on conscious and unconscious levels. These theorists drew on Lacan's concept of the mirror stage to describe how the cinematic apparatus functions. The cinematic apparatus was understood to bring about experiences that generate spectator identification and pleasure. Jean-Louis Baudry drew an explicit analogy between the construction of the nascent ego described by Lacan and the experience of film viewing in a theater. He also likened the film theater to the mythic space of Plato's cave, in which men are chained and unable to turn their heads. Behind them burns a fire, the light from which projects the shadows of puppeteers. The captives are unable to see the source of the illusion, which gives them their sense of reality. Part of our fascination with cinema, according to Baudry, is that the cinematic apparatus, with its darkened theater, projector, and oversized screen, draws us into a similarly captive or childlike relationship with an illusion. This concept has been heavily critiqued, especially for its view of film spectatorship as regressive, illusionistic, and disempowering.

The most historically important and tenacious set of concepts to come out of 1970s and 1980s psychoanalytic film theory concern gender, the gaze, and power. Controversial among these concepts is the idea that the locus of power in the field of the gaze is a male viewing position. Theories of gendered spectatorship find their most important early articulation in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," a 1975 essay by filmmaker and theorist Laura Mulvey. In it, Mulvey proposes that the form of classical Hollywood narrative cinema situates male viewers in an active position of dominant looking, relegating women to the passive role of image and object of that gaze. Mulvey draws from psychoanalysis to propose that popular narrative cinema conventions reflect a patriarchal unconscious. In classical Hollywood films, Mulvey observes, women are rarely represented as active agents driving the narrative. Rather, they appear either as passive objects framed to show their bodies or as body fragments in close-ups, decomposed into parts that may be fetishized and sexualized without concern for the human subject depicted.

In her essay, Mulvey theorizes the male spectator as being offered two kinds of subject positions with which to identify: the position of the camera, which frames and controls the female body image, or that of the active male protagonist,

for whom female characters appear as objects of desire.³² Hollywood films, in Mulvey's account, offer an experience of "woman as image, man as bearer of the look." She introduces psychoanalytic terms such as scopophilia (pleasure in looking), exhibitionism (pleasure in being looked at), and voyeurism (pleasure in looking without being seen), a term that carries the negative connotation of wielding a sneaky and powerful, if not sadistic, position within the field of the gaze. In this essay Mulvey shows how the narrative system situates the male-identified viewer in a spectatorial position of power through looking practices like scopophilia and voyeurism. Mulvey and other feminist theorists who used psychoanalysis to theorize spectatorship analyzed many different classical Hollywood films, including those of the British director Alfred Hitchcock, to reveal their privileging of male-identified pleasure in looking at the female body.³³ In Hitchcock's mystery thriller *Rear Window*, the photographer Jeffries (Jimmy Stewart), who is apartment-bound with a broken leg, uses binoculars to look into his neighbors' apartments. Those neighbors become the subjects of his fantasies, which vie with the sexualized violence and murder that he believes he may have inadvertently witnessed. Jeffries develops nicknames for the strangers he peers in on, reducing some of the women to sexualized parts, or synecdoches (in which the part is taken for the whole). A dancer is dubbed "Miss Torso," a single woman "Miss Lonelyhearts." These fetishized fragments reveal the male figure's anxiety about his own potential lack of power, projections of a fundamental castration fear that for Jeffries manifests in his broken leg in a cast.

The concept of the male gaze was adapted and revised by various scholars, including Mulvey herself.³⁴ In one of the early follow-ups to Mulvey's classic essay, film scholar Mary Ann Doane argues that the mid-century "woman's film" or melodrama offers women spectators identification opportunities that do not replicate the male gaze.³⁵ Scholars working on race, ethnicity, and class in the cinema have emphasized that gender and sexuality are not the only forces shaping power dynamics in the field of the gaze.³⁶ Elizabeth Cowie notes that one's sex or gender does not dictate identification. For example, a female spectator may experience "male pleasure," identifying with the camera position or a male protagonist.³⁷ Indeed, a male character may be presented as the passive object of the gaze. Queer theorists emphasize that cross-gender identification has been a common practice of gay and lesbian viewers who derive pleasure out of films in a market that until the 2010s offered very few gay and lesbian characters and romances. Some theorists have argued that the female position can be maintained across all points of identification,³⁸ that we must account for masculine, gay, lesbian, and trans positions among both spectators and performers,³⁹ and that we must also account for race, ethnicity, and physical ability within the field of the gaze.⁴⁰ Film and media scholars have revisited spectatorship in light of differences in context and practice across the long history of mass culture, as well as with regard to sociological and empirical findings in media reception studies, audience

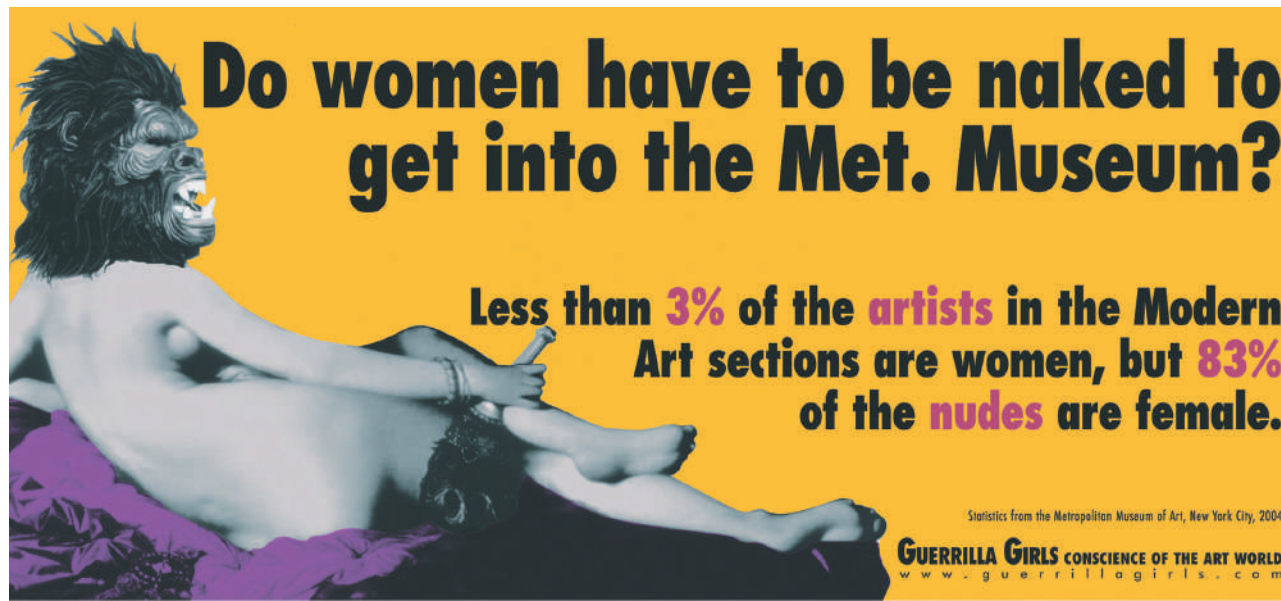


FIG. 3.27

Guerrilla Girls, *Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?*, 2005, poster

studies, and industry studies. It is by now widely agreed that identification and power in any field of the gaze is always multiple, complex, and fluid and does not necessarily follow from one's identity, given or assumed. Just as human subjectivity is complex, fragmentary, and subject to multiple forces, so too are identification and power in looking.⁴¹ Likewise, fantasy and identification enabled by visual culture are chimeric, subject to a range of political, cultural, and institutional forces.

Film studies is not the only field to have been influenced by this concern with human subjectivity and power relative to the field of the gaze. In his 1972 book *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger wrote that in the history of art, “men act, women appear.”⁴² He observed that the tradition of the nude has almost exclusively involved men in the active role of artist, with women serving as models, posed to optimize the male spectator's viewing pleasure. The lack of representation of women artists in art museums and markets (and their overrepresentation as nudes in paintings) has been a target of the Guerrilla Girls, a feminist activist art group. In a popular poster, they appropriate Ingres's painting (Fig. 3.22), covering the woman's head with a gorilla mask, to pose the question: Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?

The Guerrilla Girls assume names of dead female artists and wear gorilla masks in their public appearances, as they did in 2016 on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, both to hide their identity and to play off the gorilla/guerrilla pun.

Colbert: In 1985, the Guggenheim had zero solo shows by women artists, the Metropolitan had zero, the Whitney had zero, and the Modern had one. Thirty years later the Guggenheim had one, the Metropolitan had one, the Whitney had one, and the Modern had two.

Guerrilla Girl: Yeah, and that's the progress we've made in 30 years. And that's the whole problem, because a lot of people thought that it was an issue in the '70s and the '80s and then it got solved, but it hasn't. We still see such terrible numbers, and that's why, sadly, we need to keep doing this.

It is notable that the Guerrilla Girls first did the survey for their infamous poster in 1989, when the results showed that less than 3 percent of the artists shown in art museums were women while 83 percent of the nudes displayed there were female. In 2011 the numbers had barely improved, with women artists representing only 4 percent of the contemporary collection. In covering their faces, and that of the woman on their poster, these artists are making a joke about women being the object of the gaze, but they are also underscoring their strength as a collective of guerrilla/gorilla activists who represent a larger social group.

In 1971, the feminist art historian Linda Nochlin ironically asked: "Why have there been no great women artists?"⁴³ Postcolonial scholar Gayatri Spivak posed a question that was similarly provocative: Can the subject of colonialism (the subaltern) speak?⁴⁴ Of course there were great women artists, and of course the subjects of colonialism can speak. But throughout history, the systems of patronage, recognition, and agency have relegated women in the arts, and subjects of colonialism, to the margins. Though women have received training in the arts, major museums long followed the tacit policy of collecting and exhibiting women's work and the work of artists of color with far less frequency. In 2015, among

the top fifty contemporary auction lots of work by living artists sold at Christie's and Sotheby's (the houses that together control a vast majority of the resale art market) only four works (8 percent) were by women.⁴⁵ Gallery Tally, a Facebook-hosted, crowd-sourced

FIG. 3.28

Screen Shot of Guerrilla Girls on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, January 13, 2016



art research project, reports that whereas 60 percent of MFA studio art candidates are women, over 70 percent of the artists exhibited in the top 100 galleries in Los Angeles in 2015 were men.

Nochlin wrote that to resuscitate underconsidered female artists in history, as some art historians have done, is a worthy task, but this strategy has not been enough. Instead, she proposed, we should critique and revise what counts as “great art.” Deriding the sort of art history that casts artistic greatness as a matter of individual genius, Nochlin argued for an art history that is “dispassionate, impersonal, sociological, and institutionally oriented,” examining the “total range of [art’s] social and institutional structures.” Her challenge was bold and direct. She aimed to “reveal the entire romantic, elitist, individual-glorifying, and monograph-producing substructure upon which the profession of art history is based.”⁴⁶

Nochlin’s essay was published during the early years of second-wave feminism, when scholars in a range of fields embraced Marxist feminist analyses of labor and the economy. Nochlin also introduced the concept of a “feminine gaze” as a counterpoint to the dominant “male gaze.” These concerns were revived in the early 2000s, when the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles curator Connie Butler responded to a new wave of feminist art activism by organizing *Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, a 2007 exhibition of works by 119 artists from 20 countries that advanced discussions about the impact of feminism and the women’s movement on the art world.

Writing shortly after Nochlin, art historian Griselda Pollock considered the social circumstances around which female artists such as Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot painted and drew female subjects in the home, in contrast to their male counterparts who painted landscapes, street scenes, and architecture and featured the gaze as a defining feature of the public sphere. What distinguished Pollock was her sustained use of psychoanalytically informed Marxist feminist theories and her direct engagement with feminist film theories of the gaze to interpret this respective orientation to domestic space and the public sphere in the art of this period. Pollock adapted Spivak’s now-classic question—Can the subaltern [woman] speak?—to address the modern sexual, racial, and colonial structures in which these female artists practiced.⁴⁷ She proposed that these women artists’ works engaged in a critical dialogue with that milieu, expressing a critical politics about the erasure of domestic space through their compositional forms of drawing and painting rather than through representational iconography and metaphor.

During the period that feminist film theorists and art historians were analyzing the field of the gaze, many feminist photographers and filmmakers were producing works that engaged with theories of visual culture and sexuality. In the 1980s, performance artist Lorraine O’Grady staged what she describes as “guerrilla invasions” at New York art world events. O’Grady appeared as Mlle. Bourgeoise Noire,



FIG. 3.29

Lorraine O'Grady, *Untitled (A skeptic inspects Mlle Bourgeoise Noire's cape)*, 1980–1983/2009 (silver gelatin fiber print, 40 × 60")

wearing a tiara and a gown made from 180 pairs of thrift store gloves and introducing herself as a pageant queen from French Guyana. O'Grady has described her performances as disrupting the racial and class divides that existed in institutions of the art world. In this photograph documenting one of Mlle. Bourgeoise Noire's art world "invasions," we see men in a crowded art opening staring at O'Grady's gown.

Artist Cindy Sherman's photographic series *Untitled Film Stills* (1977–80) is another classic example from this period of the use of photography and the artist's body to perform a feminist critique of the status of the woman as spectacle and object of the look. Like O'Grady, Sherman donned costumes, in this case out-

fits like those worn by women screen stars during the classical cinema era of the 1930s through the 1960s, and produced publicity stills that ironically and pointedly posed questions about the agency of women performers and the cultural expectations and fantasies projected onto their images. Sherman invites the viewer to critically reflect on the historical dynamics of the gaze and desire without condemning the practice of looking.

In this series of 2016, Sherman once again poses in photographs of her own taking that feature costumes and accessories of imagined screen stars of the classical

film era. But the stars have now aged, along with Sherman herself. Appearing in stylized tableaux, such as this off-focus backdrop of the iconic Hollywood Hills, Sherman invokes powerful industry figures such as Susan Sarandon and Meryl Streep, women who were screen stars in their youth, and who are among the very few who have continued to command power and choice roles in the contemporary film industry as they grow older. Like Sherman, these older female high-earning stars are anomalies in an industry that, like the art world, has remained astonishingly male and white. In



FIG. 3.30

Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #575*, 2016



FIG. 3.31

Robert Mapplethorpe, *Ken and Tyler*, 1985

2015 a study revealed that just 3.4 percent of film directors were women (for television the percent was 17 percent), with women of color “largely invisible” in the industry.⁴⁸

In the 1980s, Robert Mapplethorpe’s photographic works also had a vast impact on notions of sexual power and looking practices. In *Ken and Tyler*, a photograph taken in 1985, Mapplethorpe poses the couple in symmetrical alignment, cropping out their shoulders and heads to give the spectator a close view of their light-sculpted bare buttocks, legs, and feet. These almost identically muscled legs, synecdoches of gay male beauty, are adorned by nothing other than the diagonal black-and-white window-blind shadow pattern that unites their two forms, light and shadow on black skin and white skin. Known for his artfully spare black-and-white compositions of bodies and objects such as floral arrangements, and notorious for provocative references to S&M culture and bondage in some of his work, Mapplethorpe, in this photograph, subtly



FIG. 3.32

Calvin Klein ad, 1992, with Mark Wahlberg and Kate Moss, photograph by Herb Ritts

references gay male aesthetics and interracial sexual relationships, both influencing and borrowing codes from fashion photography and body-building.

Mapplethorpe's gay male nudes have dramatically influenced the way visual theorists discuss sexuality and masculinity. In 1989 cultural critic Kobena Mercer criticized Mapplethorpe for representing black men as objects of the white male gaze and as passive subjects in photographs depicting sexual fantasy bondage scenes. However, by 1995, Mercer had changed his perspective. In the critical context that had grown up around these photographs, he now found a productive dialogue through them, one "foregrounding the intersections of difference where race and gender cut across the representation of sexuality." Context, he explained, is meaningful in that these are performances of consensual fantasy play, and not sexualized violence.⁴⁹

We can see changing norms of representation of male sexuality and gender identity in brand culture as well. Since the 1980s, the Calvin Klein brand has produced numerous print campaigns challenging conventions of male sexual representation. Calvin Klein began to experiment with homoerotic codes during the 1990s, when some of its advertisements put the muscular male body on display using the conventions of black-and-white nude art photography. This well-known 1992 ad with future actor/producer Mark Wahlberg and supermodel Kate Moss, taken by fashion photographer Herb Ritts, epitomizes how these campaigns

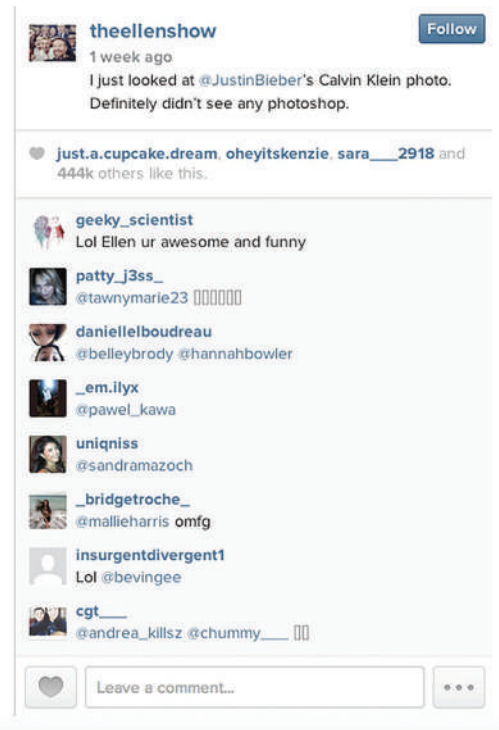
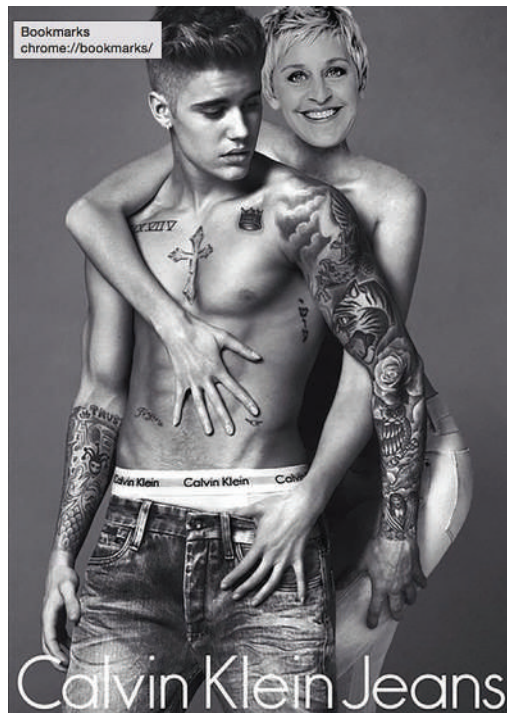
paradoxically used the unclothed male body to sell garments. In these advertisements, men are depicted as masculine objects of the sexualized gaze. The models' poses are demure, almost passive, and their bodies are thickly muscled, conveying active masculinity. But the demure pose that in the 1980s might have conveyed passivity or femininity no longer conforms to the active/passive, male/female binary.

Consider the CK campaign featuring Justin Bieber and the Dutch model Lara Stone released in spring 2015. Bieber's body is clearly on display as an object, inviting a desiring look more actively than the famously voluptuous body of Lara Stone, one of the most sought-after models of 2016. She seems to serve, in this photograph, as a kind of prop, her body hidden behind the male pop star's physique. Bieber's muscled torso and tattoos command the

FIG. 3.33

Calvin Klein ad, 2015, with Justin Bieber and Lara Stone, photograph by Tyrone Lebon





look—he is the object of the gaze. Yet as object, he still retains power. A social media debate was launched around the campaign when a photo allegedly leaked from the CK shoot to the website BreatheHeavy showed Bieber far less buff than in the ad campaign, suggesting his image was heavily retouched. BreatheHeavy published a retraction after receiving a cease-and-desist letter from Bieber’s lawyers. This debate prompted talk show host Ellen DeGeneres to post a parody to her Instagram feed (fig. 3.34), giving the campaign an even broader circulation. These kinds of recirculations via Twitter and Instagram are crucial in contemporary branding campaigns that aim to tap into the social media networks; here we can see many layers of gender play at work.

Some artists mediate the gaze by refusing it. Catherine Opie, whose photographic portraits more typically examine the display of subjectivity in everyday life, illustrates this strategy in a 1993 work. In this self-portrait, Opie turns away from the camera. Scratched into her skin are two stick figures in skirts holding hands before a house. The iconography references the idyllic childhood dream of normative family life—a house, a couple holding hands, puffy cloud—but the violence with which this scene has been etched on Opie’s back and the image of the two women holding hands demand that we reread the image as a reworking of the heteronormative aspiration of family. The image indexes the pain and difficulty of having and achieving that dream of normative family life in a lesbian partnership.

FIG. 3.34

Ellen DeGeneres parody of Justin Bieber Calvin Klein Jeans ad, as posted by @theellenshow on Instagram, January 12, 2015



FIG. 3.35

Catherine Opie, *Self-Portrait/Cutting*, 1993 (chromogenic print, edition of 8, 40 × 30")

Opie's 1991 large and vibrant color-saturated portraits of queer subjects, for which she became well known in the 1990s, also propose new modes of looking. In this series, Opie's subjects are everyday people who use dress and pose to confront the camera's gaze in compositions staged by Opie to suggest Hans Holbein the Younger's northern Renaissance court portraits.⁵⁰ With their bold backgrounds, the portraits have an intended formality that Opie uses to endow her queer subjects with integrity and respect. She states, "The photographs stare back, or they stare through you. They're very royal. I say that my friends are like my royal family."⁵¹

Although Opie deploys strategies of refusal and resignification, other artists have turned to the strategy of oversignification to demand new ways of looking. In 2014, artist Kara Walker assembled and exhibited a major work titled *A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby* inside the former Domino Sugar Factory in Brooklyn, New York. The huge figurative sculptural installation included a Sphinx, part feline and part cartoon-like, which composited stereotypes of the black female body, suggesting both a fecund Venus and a domestic Mammy. Hewn of white sugar, the huge figure was surrounded with little figurines of brown-sugar boys. Walker designated the piece "an Homage to the unpaid and



FIG. 3.36

Catherine Opie, *Jerome Caja*, 1993 (chromogenic print, edition of 10, 20 × 16")



FIG. 3.37

Hans Holbein the Younger, *Portrait of Sir Thomas More*, 1527 (oil on oak board, 29½ × 23¾")



FIG. 3.38

Kara Walker, *A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby*, 2014
(exhibition view)

overworked Artisans who have refined our Sweet tastes from the cane fields to the Kitchens of the New World on the Occasion of the demolition of the Domino Sugar Refining Plant.” Her ornate subtitle refers to the long colonial history of sugar as a key commodity in European and North American modernity. The newfound European and American taste for sweets in the 1800s motivated the slave trade from Africa to the Caribbean’s sugar plantations. The Domino factory was one of many industrial plants built in the United States to facilitate the growing demand for commercially produced confections. Walker uses sugar as a concrete metaphor of the lustful colonial appetite for power and for black female bodies as sources of agricultural and domestic labor—black bodies used to satisfy white pleasure. The work deploys sugar’s materiality as a signifier of desire in relation to the gaze.⁵²

As Walker herself anticipated, *A Subtlety* was subject not only to engaged viewer responses but also to crude reactions, as many viewers took selfies with the figure’s large, intentionally unsubtle genitalia and breasts. Walker states that the ongoing debate about black creativity is summed up in the question: “Who is looking?” She continues: “It’s always been the same answer: How do people look? How are people supposed to look? Are white audiences looking at it in the right way? And are black audiences looking to see this piece? And, of course, my question is: What is the right way to look at a piece that is full of ambiguities and ego and all the other things that go into making a monumental sculpture?”⁵³ *A Subtlety*, true to its name, demands multiple standpoints, and not one interpretation. It engages viewers in a reflexive gaze cognizant of the period of industrial modernity in which black women’s bodies served as the bedrock of domestic labor and industrial food production.

Gaming and the Gaze

The concept of the gaze dominated a particular era of film theory, but the traditional viewing experience of cinema in a darkened movie theater is an increasingly rare experience. In the range of entertainment media and visual culture experiences now available, viewer/users engage with many different modes and media. Many different kinds of looks, gazes, and interactions are at play when we use our screens. We discuss how perspective works in gaming in the following chapter. Here we note that video games raise important questions not only about the player's gaze but also about gender and subjectivity in the larger field in which games are designed, marketed, played, and discussed online.

A genre with particular relevance to a discussion of the gaze is the first-person shooter (FPS) game, which aligns the screen spectator with the point of view of a simulated camera. FPS games place the player at the center of the action by aligning their viewpoint with that of the game's protagonist. The gaze is typically laid out in three-dimensional graphics and individuated, situated in a single character, and not made omniscient. Yet, through narrative conventions, the gaze is represented (and set up to be fantasized) as all-powerful.

What are the stakes of living in gaming's fantasy field of the gaze? Video games are widely known for including few female characters that are not designed to serve as objects of a male-identified gaze. The dominance of men among designers in the industry and the genre's propensity for exaggerating the sexualized aspects of female character bodies is keenly defended despite widespread criticism online and in business forums. This question has led to a resurgent interest in the older feminist media criticism about women being constructed as the object of the look outlined earlier in this chapter. Anita Sarkeesian is an established media critic and director of the website *Feminist Frequency* who has written numerous articles about gender tropes in film and media. Her YouTube channel had thousands of subscribers when she launched a Kickstarter campaign to support a project considering the male gaze and gender tropes in video games. In response to this campaign, she received thousands of anonymous harassing messages on her Twitter account, maligning her project and threatening her with rape and murder. "Kill yourself feminists are a waste of air," wrote one anonymous respondent; "more games should have girl characters half naked such as 'Tomb Raider.'" Another poster wrote: "every feminist has their head severed from their shoulders." The harassers defended mainstream gaming's sexism, racism, ageism, and ableism, attacking Sarkeesian and others in the online video game community who questioned the misogyny and discrimination in the genre. Game developers Zoe Quinn and Brianna Wu were also subject to similar harassment and threats. Quinn was maligned for producing *Depression Quest*, a (non)fiction game about living with depression. The conflict, which came to be known as GamerGate, revealed the extent to which a surprisingly large number of participants in gaming communities

would resort to threats of violence to keep the industry's field of the gaze intact and to censor criticism and deride alternatives, such as games emphasizing social justice or strong female characters. Game studies scholar Mia Consalvo, writing in the inaugural issue of the feminist journal *Ada*, has called for more documentation, research, and analysis in response to this pervasive sexism in online gameplay and the industry. The GamerGate phenomenon makes it clear that we have not come a long way from the dynamics of visual pleasure and sexual difference that Mulvey critiqued in her 1975 analysis of Hollywood cinema.

In this chapter we have traced the intersections of modernity, visibility, and the gaze from early modern practices of looking, built environments, and representations to the present. In modern societies, visibility, looking, and the gaze have been key factors in the shaping of power, the forms of power dynamics, and resistances to power structures through countervisuality. From the prison to surveillance cameras to selfies to first-person shooter video gaming, how we look, who gets to look, who is looked at, and how those positions are negotiated are crucial to how power dynamics shape our cultures. In the next chapter we discuss the frameworks through which those looks have been defined and constructed in relation to representing the world as it is, from the Renaissance to the present day.

Notes

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20. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 25.
21. Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).
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23. See Phillip Honenberger " 'Le Nègre et Hegel': Fanon on Hegel, Colonialism, and the Dialectics of Recognition," *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 5, no. 3 (2007): 153–62; Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, [1952] 2008).
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44. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313.
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Realism and Perspective: From Renaissance Painting to Digital Media

What do we mean when we describe a painting, photograph, or media text as “realistic”? In the case of photography, a technique historically linked to mechanical objectivity, realism is sometimes tied to ethical ideas about whether and how accurately photographs represent events as they occurred. We may expect photojournalists to observe “realist” conventions rather than using the camera in a highly interpretative manner. Realism has been associated with many different styles and meanings and has been fraught with questions about authenticity. In late nineteenth-century American journalism, the idea of realism was widely embraced as the profession tried to separate itself from politics to show the social conditions of everyday life. Growing concern about propaganda and the journalist’s status as “untrained accidental witness” operating with “cultural blinders” led some to hope that the mechanical method of photography might provide greater “objectivity” than the written report.¹

“Realism” then became more strongly associated with a particular pictorial photographic style, social realism, associated in this context with the nineteenth-century photography of humanitarian social reformers such as the social realist photographers Jacob Riis and John Thomson. Riis was a Danish immigrant reporter who used sketches and a camera, after the introduction of flash photography, to reveal immigrant workers’ living conditions. In the 1890 photographs included in the book *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*, Riis used the new technology of flash photography to reveal living conditions in an unlit tenement room typical of those occupied by New York factory workers, who had neither the time nor the income to clean and make repairs.

In Chapter 3, we showed a tenement photograph by Lewis Hine (fig. 3.2) in a discussion about the built environment of urban factory workers. Before Hine, Riis used the visual medium of photography to raise awareness about the living conditions of the poor through journalism, lectures, and books for a middle-class and wealthy audience. His work, like that of Hine, is widely noted for its photographic realism. Most of us probably assume that we know “photographic realism” when we see it, but we may not necessarily associate it with scientific objectivity. Rather, we may recognize its roots in an older style of documentation in which conventions such as grainy image texture and black-and-white film, which reflected the filmstock and technology available at the time, tug on our heartstrings and shape our politics through our feelings.

Furthermore, definitions of realism change significantly over time. Since the 1980s, we have seen a dramatic rise in the use of computer graphics to modify digital photographs. The convergence of photography and digital imaging has resulted in ethical as well as aesthetic questions in what are by now heavily intersected fields. In the 1980s, designers and computer scientists working in the growing area of computer graphics raised the question of whether or not photographic realism was really the correct standard for the medium.² There are no universal standards for realism in computer graphics, though there has been much discussion and research about the matter. Color scientist James Ferwerda classifies computer graphics realism into three categories: physical realism, in which the image provides the same visual stimulation as the scene it represents; photorealism, in which the image produces the same visual response as the scene; and functional realism, in which the image provides the same visual information as the scene. But we might also consider how computer imaging references other genres and styles such as action cinema, painting, and flight simulation training programs. Each brings a different set of meanings, memories, and experiences.

In fine art, realism has taken a variety of forms and been associated with a range of meanings. As in journalism, fine art realism has been strongly associated with political movements and social reform. For instance, realism in nineteenth-century France was a post-revolution movement in which painters chose everyday subject matter, including scenes of laboring workers and industrial life. Rendering these without romantic heroism, they rejected the sentimental scenes of bourgeois life that were more common in French painting of the Romantic period.

In this chapter we consider realism in a range of visual cultures, focusing on the origins and legacies of perspective. In some cases, the same conventions have been linked to different political agendas. In earlier chapters we noted Saussure’s dictum that the link between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, shifting, and contextual. Here we demonstrate that it is important to look at the signifier’s production—the processes through which codes and conventions emerge in context. The history of visual art and culture reveals many styles associated with realism

FIG. 4.1

Painted terracotta funerary figures from the mausoleum of the first Qin emperor, Qin dynasty, c. 221–206 BCE



(many realisms) and many motives and meanings linked to imaging conventions such as perspective, which is strongly associated with many forms of realism. We focus on perspective because it is a cornerstone of pictorial realism across painting, photography, film, video, and computer graphics. By tracing the ways different types of perspective have developed, we show how practices of looking and image-making have been tied to conventions and practices used to know and experience “the real.”

Artworks and artifacts have long been invested with special powers beyond their role in basic symbolic communication. Consider the tomb of the emperor of China’s Qin dynasty, which dates back to 200 BCE. In 1974, Chinese farmers digging a well found an army of 7,500 life-size clay warriors and horses. Each figure is unique. Archaeologists believe the figures stood in for actual soldiers, who during the earlier Shang dynasty would have been buried with the dead emperor. This may be seen as a kind of realism insofar as the statues are substitutes for actual soldiers (who must have been grateful for this change!).

A tenet in photography is that the realist image depicts something as an observer saw it. The function of visual art and photography, however, has not always been to reproduce objects, people, and events as the observer would see them; for instance, much modern and contemporary art has been devoted to representing the world in new ways. In the few examples of early Christian art that have survived (the second-century CE painted ceilings of Rome’s underground burial catacombs, for example, in fig. 4.2), pictorial elements appear to have served as symbolic communication and expression among members of marginal and persecuted religious sects whose public religious expression was severely restricted. Creators of the ceiling paintings communicated through symbols and icons. Fishes and loaves, for example, probably signified a sacramental rite. Variations in scale and mixing of graphic and decorative elements with representational ones in a single scene suggest

FIG. 4.2

Fish and loaves fresco, Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Catacombs of San Callisto, Rome, Italy, after 150 CE



that concern with symbols and icons overshadowed concern with reproduction (making things look as they might to the eye perceiving them).

By the beginning of the Renaissance (the fourteenth century), many painters labored to reproduce scenes as they would have appeared to observers. It is said that painting and sculpture became more “scientific” during the Renaissance because artists began to use mechanical devices to see, measure, and render. However, this does not mean that art became less spiritual and emotional at this time. Rather, science was associated with spiritual beliefs and meanings. When Renaissance painters organized the canvas according to optical laws, rather than to denote symbolic value and meaning, they were in many cases working under church patronage. The formal science of organizing pictorial space on the model of the embodied eye took on great religious and philosophical significance during this period.

Realism is often defined in opposition to abstraction, yet such distinctions require scrutiny. Some twentieth-century abstract styles, such as Pop art, have incorporated some realist elements. Writing in the 1960s, art critic Lawrence Alloway proposed that Pop art “is neither abstract nor realistic, but has contacts in both directions.”³ Whereas French Resistance era art critic Jean Cassou proposed that “a realistic movement in art is always revolutionary,” art critic Donald Cuspit, writing in the late modernist era, countered that “insofar as Pop art is realistic, it is reactionary.”⁴ But Jean Cassou also wrote, regarding nineteenth-century Spanish realism, that “the word realism is one of the most vague and ambitious of the vocabulary of aesthetics.” In fact, he noted, “there are thousands of ways for a painter to be a realist.”⁵ As these statements show, realism is a broadly applied term, and the division between realism and abstraction is not exactly clear or stable.

Types of Realism

We noted earlier that much “realism” has been political. Twentieth-century Russian realism is a strong case in point, demonstrating how the term realism came to designate two very different styles and two very different political views. In 1920, the Russian brothers Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner wrote and circulated the “Realistic Manifesto” to capture the key principles of the Soviet Constructivist art movement that arose after the 1917 October Revolution brought down Russia’s tsarist autocracy and launched the communist Soviet Union. The manifesto criticized the modern art forms of Impressionism, Cubism, and Futurism, condemning their use of line, color, volume, and mass as mere illusionism. It championed art practice grounded in the material reality of a space and time undergoing technological transformation. Gabo designed the sculpture *Standing Wave*, pictured here, in 1919–20, just as the manifesto was being drafted. Industrial materials were new to the region, hard to find, and had not been used by fine artists before. Gabo demonstrated to his students the modern technological principles of kinetics. Drawing from the branch of

physics studying motion and its causes, Gabo emphasized space and time as the basis of change in social life. This sculpture's movement, spurred when the vertical metal element vibrates, creates a wave of physical movement in volumetric space that is visible as blur in the photograph. The manifesto called for artists to actively embrace the new reality of the scientific, industrial, and technological materials and forms through which the Soviet society was being rebuilt. It also insisted that this new dynamic art be displayed in everyday public spaces rather than in galleries and museums.

The Constructivist's Realistic Manifesto proposed that geometric abstraction and objective form best represented the modernizing Soviet state and its forward-looking citizenry. Emphasizing experimentation and an avant-garde approach to art as a means through which to advance change in public ideology, the manifesto reflected Leninist Bolshevik vanguard tenets.

Man with a Movie Camera, a film made by Dziga Vertov in 1929, is another classic example of Constructivist realist abstraction. Though the film was made five years after Soviet Premier Vladimir Lenin's death, it embodies many of the principles of art made under his leadership in the early post-revolution years. *Man with a Movie Camera* is a montage film of graphic patterns and abstract compositions, edited to match the pace of change in Soviet everyday life after the 1917 October Revolution. To experience the rhythm of the film was to experience the breathless industrial transformation of the state. Born Denis Kaufman, Dziga Vertov chose a pseudonym that in Russian means "spinning top," a name that references his excitement about the new Soviet state. Film form reflected the vanguard spirit, inspiring painters, photographers, poster artists, architects, and sculptors to incorporate movement in their creations. Vertov's newsreels of the 1920s, titled *Kino Pravda* (or film truth), captured Russian life on the streets as viewed through the eyes of a "spinning top" cinematographer. These newsreels were taken across the vast country by train and projected on walls and the sides of trains in towns where no theaters yet existed. *Man with a Movie Camera* is organized around the standpoint of the title's cameraman, who moves through the dizzying spectacle of new urban structures, his human-machine camera eye jumping from sight to sight. Although it does not



FIG. 4.3

Naum Gabo, *Kinetic Construction (Standing Wave)*, 1919–20, replica 1985 (metal, wood, electric motor, 616 × 241 × 190 mm)



FIG. 4.4

Screen shot from film *Man with a Movie Camera*, dir. Dziga Vertov, 1929

contain conventional point-of-view camerawork and editing, the film incorporates the cameraman as the figure through whom the spectator sees urban life. The cameraman scouts shots on the street and squats dangerously in the path of an oncoming train. Like Margaret Bourke-White in her documentation of the Chrysler Building, he even perches atop buildings to capture the modernizing city. Double exposures render his gaze not so much surveillant and god-like as immersed in everyday life, like the subject of de Certeau's city streets described in Chapter 3. The "spinning top" destabilizes the gaze. Like Bourke-White, he invites us to see industrial progress as awesome. In a scene filmed in a movie theater, the cameraman documents hundreds of mechanical folding seats as they open in unison, as if the chairs, invested with machine agency, welcome Soviet citizens to sit down and enjoy Vertov's film.

Man with a Movie Camera embodies realism in its attention to the everyday Soviet life, even as this content is shot and edited in a fragmented, prismatic, and nonnarrative style. This approach reproduces the real pace and rhythm of post-1917 Soviet life and its physical and material forms. However, in Soviet society ideas about realism changed dramatically within a few short years. After Lenin's death in 1924, the Soviet leader Josef Stalin rejected the vanguard approach, claiming the work was too abstract for the majority of the populace to understand or appreciate. Over several decades, Stalin mandated a turn back to a classical pictorial style that had prevailed before the revolution. This revived style became known as Soviet Socialist Realism. Thus, the materials-based, formal abstract realism outlined in the Realistic Manifesto was undercut by another very different, even antithetical approach to realism. Socialist Realism was the official, state-sanctioned art form from the late 1920s until the late 1960s. This shift to pictorial realism is represented here by a 1934 painting by Serafima Ryangina, which uses bright,

cheery colors and a pictorial style to depict happy, healthy workers installing cables on an electrical transmission tower high in the Soviet mountains during the post-revolution modernization period.

With Social Realism, however, the Stalinist Soviet state used art to promote feelings of nationalism and support for government ideologies to the exclusion of other views and styles. At the height of European and American modernist formalism, this style dominated across the Soviet Union. Under the pictorial realism mandate, it became dangerous for artists working in communist countries to make abstract works, as they were viewed as a disservice to state ideology. Though some artists continued to produce abstract work, they were questioned, persecuted, imprisoned, and exiled to Siberian work

camps, risking death for their art. This climate of political opposition continued in the Soviet Union even after Stalin's death in 1953. But "unofficial" art continued to be made and shown despite these prohibitions and dangers. Exhibitions were held covertly in artists' own apartments, at great risk. In this photograph, we see documentation of a covert apartment exhibition of "unofficial" art.

In 1974, with censorship and surveillance of "unofficial" artists still in place, the abstract painters Oscar Rabine and Evgeny Rukhin organized a now-famous public display of the abstract art being made by more than thirty artists who defied the state mandate. The exhibition was unique in that the group had received permission from the state to display the works. The authorized location was outdoors—a neglected park field on the outskirts of Moscow, far enough away from the city center to attract attention, but close enough for Moscow's international press to arrive by public



FIG. 4.5

Serafima Ryangina, *Higher and Higher*, 1934 (paint on canvas)

FIG. 4.6

Works by Dezider Tóth on display in Depozit, an unofficial exhibition space for nonconformist art in Tóth's apartment at 1 Moscow Street, Bratislava, Slovakia, ca. 1976–77





FIG. 4.7

Evgeny Ruhkin, *Composition with Icon*, 1972 (paint on canvas, 98 × 99 cm)

transportation. Reporter Joseph Backstein recalls arriving late to a scene of mayhem. Thugs hired as “civil servants” by the local authorities were tossing paintings into trucks, crushing works with a bulldozer, and dispersing spectators with water canons as a torrential rain fell, causing further destruction and chaos.⁶ Some of the journalists present were beaten up but managed to document the scene. The next day the *New York Times* ran a front-page story about the

exhibition. Many of the artists were questioned by the authorities and subsequently emigrated, and organizer Evgeny Ruhkin shortly thereafter died in his apartment under mysterious circumstances. Within weeks of the international publicity surrounding this event, the state authorized another exhibition of abstract works and the climate began to shift. Thus, we can see how the style of abstraction, one brand of realism, was seen as a threat to Soviet ideology even as late as the 1970s, while another brand of realism, the pictorial approach, was used as a political tool to maintain state power and control over ideology.

Soviet Socialist Realism coincided with French Poetic Realism, yet another form of realism that served a different political agenda. This was an approach to filmmaking during the 1930s that developed in opposition to the narrative film style that prevailed in the mainstream French film industry. Advocates of Poetic Realism felt that French mainstream industry films pandered to a complacent bourgeoisie. The new style, influenced by Surrealism and associated with filmmakers sympathetic to the French Popular Front (an alliance of left-wing political groups), was dark and lyrical. The term *realism* refers to the fact that films made in this style tended to dramatize the social conditions of the French working class, mostly through fictional stories featuring tragic antiheroes. This movement includes such films as Marcel Carné’s *Children of Paradise* (1945) and Jean Renoir’s *Grand Illusion* (1938) and *The Rules of the Game* (1939).

French Poetic Realism inspired yet another form of realism: Italian Neorealism, a film style of the late 1940s and 1950s. The Italian Neorealists included Michelangelo Antonioni, Luchino Visconti, Roberto Rossellini, and Vittorio De Sica, directors who created films commenting through allegory and allusion upon Italy’s bleak economy and dire politics after the 1943 fall of Mussolini’s Fascist regime. Using untrained actors from the Italian working class and poor and filming on location

FIG. 4.8

Screen shot from film *Rome, Open City*, dir. Roberto Rossellini, 1945

in the urban ghettos of Rome and the poverty-stricken rural south, the Italian Neorealist directors introduced new styles of narrative fiction filmmaking that included ironic and farcical political allegory (as in Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1966 *Hawks and Sparrows*) and stark depictions of poverty and political despair (Roberto Rossellini's 1946 *Paisan*).

These directors shot on grainy black-and-white stock evoking war-era documentary newsreels and shunned the pompous styles of prewar Italian film and literature, the industry studios in Rome, and the happy endings typical of American Hollywood films. Poetic Realism and Italian Neorealism were associated with a camera style championed by French film critic André Bazin, who proposed that the long take (as opposed to Hollywood's editing style of many cuts) and staging of scenes in deep space, using deep-focus cinematography (as opposed to shallow sets shot in shallow focus), allowed these films to lay bare everyday realities.⁷ This still from Rossellini's 1945 film *Rome: Open City* shows the staging of a scene in deep space. The shot is carefully staged and framed so that action is visible in many parts of the frame at once.

Each style of realism discussed thus far expressed a particular worldview specific to its era and politics. As we saw in the case of the Constructivist artists and the Socialist Realist painters, what makes up realism in a given political time and place can be subject to intense contestation, and engaging in one form of realism over another can be a political choice that may incur risk and impact one's career. In all cases, realism has been a concept levied powerfully in the expression of political movements through visual form.

In his book *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault used the term *episteme* to describe the way that an inquiry into truth and the real is organized in a given era. An episteme is an accepted, dominant mode of acquiring and organizing knowledge in a given historical period. Understanding the work of signs is one way we can identify an era's episteme or dominant worldview. Each historical period has a different episteme—that is, a different way of ordering things or organizing and representing knowledge about things. Each of these different realisms demonstrates the different epistemes of its context. The episteme of Constructivism ordered art according to a Soviet revolutionary theory of structure as the real basis of a society,



prioritizing the value of industrial materials and forms and their signifying power in embodying the meanings of the new society. The episteme of Socialist Realism entailed a belief that returning to the familiar codes, conventions, and materials of traditional pictorial conventions would promote national conformity with the new state ideology. Between these epistemes there was a shift toward dissemination of political ideals and away from innovation of form.

Writing about photography and film in the 1960s and 1970s, Bazin proposed that realism is tied to the optics of the camera's lens. It is important to understand how social and political meanings of truth and the real are attached to different formulas for spatial representation. We approach this topic through the subject of perspective in the next section in order to underscore our point that form and method do not simply convey meaning and epistemic values; they produce them.

Perspective

Perspective is a set of techniques for depicting spatial depth within two-dimensional pictorial space. Suggesting physical depth is not inherently a more realist approach to organizing an image field. Plato regarded techniques for rendering depth as a kind of deception. We may trace the roots of perspective back to early sources such as Euclid's optical studies demonstrating that light travels in straight lines, or the *Opticae Thesaurus Alhazeni* (1572), a Latin translation of the tenth-century writings of Abu Ali Al-hasan Ibn Alhasen (Alhazen), a mathematician and astronomer from Basrah (Iraq) who spent most of his career in Spain. Renaissance perspective exemplifies that era's integration of science and art. We are interested in perspective's emergence as both a representational method and a scientific and artistic metaphor for a dominant episteme. The use of perspective in a work has signified realism across different periods, from the Renaissance to the present. Our focus on perspective allows us to consider the ways in which images can function not only as representations of space, but also as ways of seeing that are formally integral to worldviews.

During the scientific revolution that took place from the mid-fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries, developments in navigation, astronomy, and biology were linked to radical changes in the European worldview. These changes eroded the role of the Church in cultural and political authority. Many new scientific ideas, such as Galileo's theories about planetary movement, were seen as a threat to the Church and were the source of struggle. Galileo was tried for heresy because of his scientific ideas. However, by the eighteenth century science had emerged as a dominant social force. The Enlightenment, an eighteenth-century intellectual movement, saw an embrace of science and ideologies of rationalism and progress. The power of human reason, it was believed, would overcome superstition, and scientific knowledge would overtake ignorance and bring prosperity through the

technical mastery of nature, introducing justice and order to human affairs. Rationalism and the elevation of science and technology, trends associated with philosopher and mathematician René Descartes, were established as strong ideologies in this time period and would lay the foundations for modernity.

The linear perspective system demonstrated by the goldsmith and architect Filippo Brunelleschi in the early 1400s is widely regarded as a major turning point in perspective's emergence as a dominant way of organizing two-dimensional visual space. Brunelleschi

conceived of the picture as a kind of mirror or window frame through which one sees the world. A famous story told about Brunelleschi by his biographer Antonio Manetti concerns perspectival drawing.

Brunelleschi, the story goes, painted a precise drawing onto the surface of a mirror: the outlines of the baptistery of the Florence cathedral, for which he would later design a dome that would be regarded as his most important architectural accomplishment. When he continued the lines beyond the point where the buildings ended, he noted that they converged at the horizon. He had viewers face the baptistery and then peer through the back of his mirror-painting via a small peephole he had drilled into in its center. Another mirror was then positioned facing the viewer, allowing the viewer to see that the painting looked nearly identical to the actual peephole view.⁸ Brunelleschi's system differed from earlier, more intuitive and empirical forms of perspective in its use of instruments to measure distances with accuracy against the real structure. Not only did a drawing depict a building, the building's plan could be derived and even reproduced from that drawing. Brunelleschi studied classical Greek columns and architectural forms to decipher the measurement system the Greeks used to arrive at what he regarded as perfect designs, like those found in nature.

The earliest known publication on linear perspective as a geometric system was written by the Renaissance scholar Alberti, who described linear perspective first in Latin (in *De Pictura*, 1435) and then in an Italian version (*Della Pittura*, 1436) that made the principles of perspective available to artists who were literate but not Latin scholars. "I first draw a rectangle of right angles," he wrote, "which I treat just like an open window through which I might look at what will be painted there."⁹ Mathematical and optical rules that he argued were derived from nature itself are described as the source for this system, which is illustrated in this diagram. To demonstrate this system, he used the example of a floor composed of square tiles. The point marked "V" is the vanishing point toward which the parallel lines of the

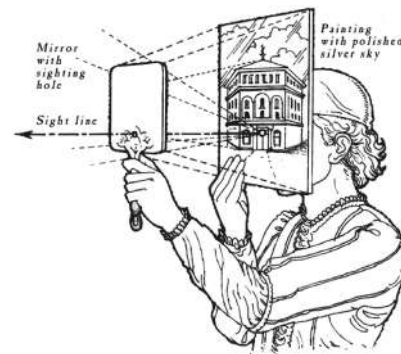


FIG. 4.9

Illustration of Brunelleschi with mirror showing building, c. 1410–1415

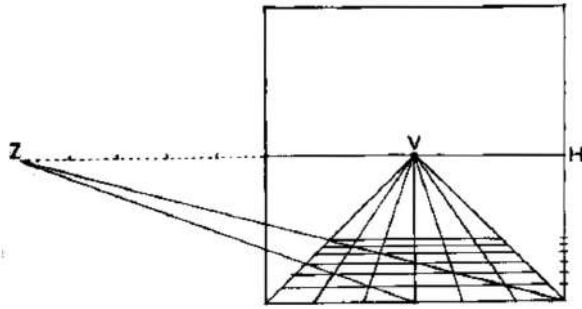


FIG. 4.10

Illustration from Leon Battista
Alberti, *De Pictura*, 1435

tiled floor converge, giving the effect that the floor recedes into space, much like the road where Pina runs in the frame from *Rome, Open City* discussed earlier.

Variations on this perspective system would be devised with two and three vanishing points, but in all models a single, fixed spectator position remained the conceptual anchor. As Anne Friedberg writes in her book *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft*, the trope of the window as the frame through which seeing is organized has a surprisingly long and relatively uncontested life in practices of mimetic representation, from Brunelleschi to the digital era.¹⁰ Friedberg emphasizes that Alberti's window was both a method and a metaphor for organizing space. The window as organizing tool for perception has had a long life that, she suggests, has culminated in the era of the computer screen, which may offer a view of multiple frames and different perspectives at once.

Brunelleschi drew the cathedral in part because he needed to know more about its structure to build its dome. Architectural drawing relies on a precise representational system emphasizing the measurability of basic forms in space, so the drawing can serve as a model for a future space, and not just a representation of an existing, real space. Brunelleschi's goals were at first quite different from Renaissance artists representing religious views and stories. When Renaissance artists incorporated perspective into their paintings of biblical scenes, they often used buildings and distant landscapes to reference the new tool for indicating structures in deep space that Alberti had documented.



The individual body viewed close up was a less easy object to fit into the perspective formula. In Sandro Botticelli's *Cestello Annunciation* (1489), a tempera painting, the archangel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary are situated in the foreground. They are standing in an interior space on a tile floor, the lines of which emphasize linear perspective and a single vanishing point, which can be found in the middle of

FIG. 4.11

Sandro Botticelli, *Cestello Annunciation*, 1489 (tempera on wood panel, 62½ × 59")

FIG. 4.12

Simone Martini and Lippo
Memmi, *The Annunciation*, 1333
(tempera and gold on panel,
72½ × 82⅝")

the horizon line made visible in the open door frame behind Gabriel. Distant buildings are strung along the horizon. The viewer is drawn to look deep into the composition by the receding path of a winding river. The open door gives the relatively shallow architectural interior in which the figures are painted an opening

onto a second, much deeper space. This second space, a landscape, gives the composition a degree of depth that is unusual up to this point in the history of painting.

This image's representation of depth in linear perspective contrasts with prior depictions of the Annunciation (the moment when the angel Gabriel announces to the Virgin Mary that she is pregnant, a popular subject among European artists at this time). Simone Martini painted this version of the Annunciation in 1333, more than a century and a half before Botticelli's work. In this work, the room depicted is shallow, and there is no orientation toward a vanishing point, though some depth is nonetheless indicated. The rendering of the vase and the chair, for example, suggests their positions relative not only to a floor but also to a wall at the deepest plane. Yet certain graphic elements continue to function through other representational codes. For example, a line of Latin text emanates from the archangel's mouth toward Mary. This is not, of course, meant to show what really exists in space but rather to represent speech in a means similar to a graphic novel or comic frame. Text (in this case representing speech) introduces another logic into the frame, interrupting the visual logic of perspective. The codes and conventions in Gothic and early Renaissance works contribute to a range of later styles. Martini's symbolic, narrative, and textual strategies can be found in contemporary art forms such as the graphic arts and comics.

Systems such as the perspectival grid may provide realism based on the idea of a spectator's fixed point of view, but Botticelli's use of perspective does little to further the symbolic and the narrative elements so strongly present in Martini's version of the Annunciation. And there are forms not well captured in perspective, such as the river in this painting. Perspective is, in the Botticelli work, a formal exercise framing an iconic scene. The figures' iconic meaning, which is religious, stands apart from perspective's iconic meaning here, which is scientific. Apart from representing actual space, the presence of perspective in Botticelli's annunciation signifies scientific progress and newer, more advanced ways of seeing. The two



meanings, religion and science, stand in tension with one another at this historical moment. As Friedberg observes, with the introduction of the device of the window frame through which the observer sees the world, *how* the world is framed becomes more significant than what is *in* the frame.

Throughout art history, the role of perspective in the formation of a modern scientific worldview has been interpreted in different ways. Recent accounts have stressed a paradox: paintings organized by perspective conventions take the fixed gaze of the individual spectator as the organizing locus. But at the same time, the perspective system displaces the seeing individual with a mechanical device that approximates the human gaze. In 1927, German art historian Erwin Panofsky proposed that perspective, as it developed from the Renaissance forward, became the paradigmatic, spatial form of the modern worldview associated with Descartes's seventeenth-century rationalist philosophy.¹¹ Rationalism is the view that true knowledge of the world derives from reason and not from embodied, subjective experience. In the rationalist model, space is knowable through mapping and measuring with tools that aid and correct human perception.

The Cartesian grid is an important tool in cartography and in systems for graphic and computer modeling, measuring, locating, and manipulating three-dimensional forms on a two-dimensional plane. Descartes developed this system in 1637 by specifying the position of a point or object on a surface, bisecting it with two intersecting axes positioned across a grid. By organizing space around three distinct axes, Descartes provided a model for measuring, designing, and manipulating dimensional shapes with great precision.

In 1972, John Berger, like Panofsky before him, interpreted perspective as a system that anticipated Cartesian rationalism and objectivity's value in modern science: "every drawing or painting that used perspective," he stated, "proposed to the spectator that he was the unique centre of the world."¹² In this view, the history of Western painting from the Renaissance forward is a march toward the Cartesian worldview, in which instruments of scientific reason put the individual human subject at the center of the universe, but at that same time displaced the human with a machine. Art historian Norman Bryson further refined previous art historical accounts of perspective's trajectory, proposing that Alberti's perspectival system offered a representation of a self-knowing viewpoint paradoxically removed from the spatial conditions of embodied subjectivity.¹³ Alberti's system, Bryson explained, situated the viewer as both the origin and the object of the look, while at the same time positing a god's-eye viewpoint.

The fifteenth-century development of scientific perspective is thus widely seen as the result of Renaissance interest in the fusion of art and science, intensifying the movement toward science into the modern period in which Cartesian mathematics and rationalism would become dominant modes of knowledge. Although perspective placed the human observer at the locus of the image and, as Berger argued, at the center of the world, it also displaced the human subject with a mechanical instrument.

Perspective and the Body

Representation of the body in perspectival space, as we have noted, poses an interesting challenge for geometric perspective. As the two Annunciation paintings show, techniques for rendering space advanced at a different pace from techniques for rendering the body as a dimensional entity. In early perspectival paintings, the body is not given the same precise treatment as volumetric space, even where multiple bodies are rendered accurately to recede in space relative to one another. Recall that in ancient Egypt, representations of the size of an object or person represented a figure's social importance, rather than representing relative distance. A few years before Botticelli painted his *Cestello Annunciation*, Andrea Mantegna, a court artist in Padua, Italy, painted *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (another popular theme among Renaissance painters). This painting of Christ laid out on a marble slab, his genitals covered but his chest and arms left bare, is a classic example of the use of anatomical foreshortening, a set of techniques used to make the body appear to recede in space. This work is widely referenced as an iconic example of the use of perspective to achieve a high level of anatomical realism.

Mantegna's painting shows that depicting the body demands a different set of techniques. Using precise perspectival accuracy to render this human body receding in space would have resulted in the appearance of exaggeration or gross distortion. Is Mantegna's drawing a realist rendering of the body, or is it an exaggerated or subjective view?

The limits of perspective can be seen too in a sixteenth-century engraving by the German printmaker and painter Albrecht Dürer. It depicts an artist using linear perspective to render the human body, but with a twist that would seem to indicate the artist's self-consciousness about the role of perspective in creating a powerful "seeing through," as Dürer himself described it.¹⁴ In this image, the draftsman looks through a grid at a curvaceous model, attempting to render her nude body within the laws of perspective. Geoffrey Batchen writes that this image could be a critique of perspective as a form of looking, for not only is the draftsman's page blank, but we as viewers are allowed to see the technical trick used to produce an image of the



FIG. 4.13

Andrea Mantegna, *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, c. 1480 (tempera on canvas, 27 × 32")



FIG. 4.14

Albrecht Dürer, *Draftsman Drawing a Nude*, illustration from *The Painter's Manual*, 1525

“real.”¹⁵ It may be said that the scientific grid gets in the way of sexually pleasurable looking at the nude. The simpler point we wish to make is that the perspectival grid works much better to depict built architectural space

than the human body. The grid’s precision, as we saw in Mantegna’s *Lamentation*, can drain the living body of its mobility and fluidity.

Dürer made copies of Mantegna’s works to master his style and produced a famous engraving and painting titled *Adam and Eve* (1504 and 1507, respectively) in which he rendered nude figures not “from life” or through strict application of perspective techniques, but through a combination of sources that Dürer believed would come together to make a perfectly proportional body. Dürer wrote, “One may often search through two or three hundred men without finding amongst them more than one or two points of beauty. You therefore . . . must take the head from

some and the chest, arm, leg, hand and foot from others.”¹⁶ Thus, for Dürer, realism was achieved not by seeing one body from the fixed perspective of an imagined spectator but by merging different parts of different bodies viewed and sketched at different times and in different places. The history of anatomical rendering thus provides insight about another potential history of modern visuality: that of composites, collage, and remixes.

This raises the question of how the potentially distorting or deceptive aspects of viewing systems have been understood over



FIG. 4.15

Albrecht Dürer, *Adam and Eve*, 1507 (oil on two panels, each 209 × 81 cm)

time. As we noted, some cultures, such as that of ancient Greek philosophy, rejected techniques designed to reproduce what the human eye sees, regarding this approach as trickery and not realism. The Renaissance era embraced the idea that it is art's social function to reproduce human vision through drawing instruments designed to replicate vision. Indeed, Leonardo da Vinci wrote in his diaries, "Have we not seen pictures which bear so close a resemblance to the actual thing that they have deceived both men and beasts?"¹⁷ Da Vinci's point about deception is interesting in light of a 1485 drawing in which he experimented with a technique called perspectival anamorphosis, in which an image's perspective can only be read at a given angle. If one holds the drawing perpendicular to one's face, one sees an abstract relationship of marks and lines. But by holding the image at an acute angle leading away from one's face, one can see a drawing of an eye coming into view, its proper perspective made visible by the receding plane of the drawing surface. While we might assume that da Vinci was playing with technique, Surrealist artist Salvador Dalí used anamorphic perspective in some of his paintings to make Surrealist plays on meaning. For Dalí, anamorphosis invokes a kind of mental play as the spectator tries to make sense of contrasting viewing positions.

Look closely at the bust of the French Enlightenment philosopher Voltaire that sits on the pedestal on the piano. Voltaire's eyes, nose, and chin are made up of two Dutch Renaissance merchants in stereotypical collars and hats. In the dish next

FIG. 4.16

Salvador Dalí, *Slave Market with the Disappearing Bust of Voltaire*, 1940 (oil on canvas, 18¼ × 25⅝")



to the bust, you may notice a plum that doubles as the buttocks of the man positioned in the distance behind the piano. The pear doubles as the base of the distant hill. In playing with our expectations that images offer perspectival ways of seeing, this image evokes a surreal worldview in its representation of unexpected views and double meanings.

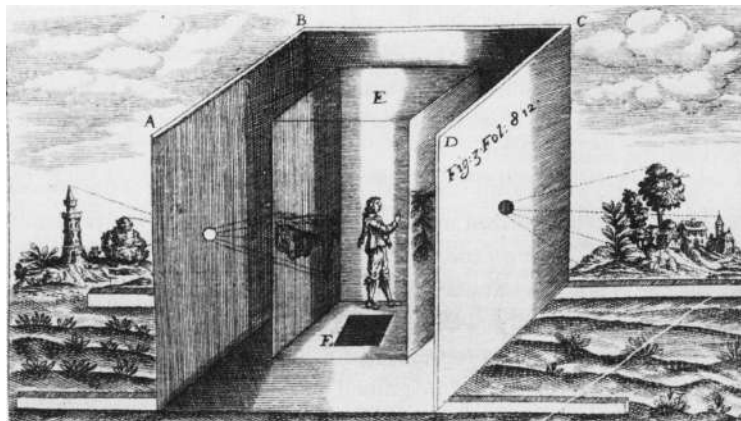
The Camera Obscura

Today, perspective is recognized as one possible realist technique among others; it does not characterize our era's episteme in a totalizing way. The value of perspectival realism continues to derive from its status in some imaging modalities, such as lens-based systems, but not all. With the development and use of the camera obscura from the tenth to the nineteenth centuries, followed by its adaptation to the design of the photographic camera, single-point perspective has continued to hold its own as the standard for documenting space in an objective manner. Yet, at the same time, the photographic camera brings us back to empiricism, which is a counterpoint to the rationalism of mechanical objectivity through which we have interpreted perspective's history.

The camera obscura is based on the phenomenon that light rays bouncing off a well-lit object or scene, when passed into a darkened chamber (a box or a room) through a tiny hole, create an inverted projection that can be seen on a surface inside the chamber. This phenomenon is mentioned in the writings of Euclid, Aristotle, and the Mohist philosopher Mozi in fifth-century China. The Chinese scientist Shen Kuo, during the Song dynasty, described the geometrical attributes of this phenomenon in his 1088 book the *Dream Pool Essays*. A key figure in the camera obscura's development was Alhazen. Whereas the ancient Greeks believed that light emanated from the eye, Alhazen demonstrated that in fact light enters the eye. He built a camera obscura modeled on this phenomenon, and through it he shifted the study of the physics of light

FIG. 4.17

Camera obscura, 1646



from philosophy (theorizing about the phenomenon) to empirical experimentation (actual observation).

Camera obscuras range in scale from freestanding rooms and tents that a human body can enter and stand in to small boxes like those that early photographers Louis Daguerre and William Fox Talbot adapted into photographic cameras. In the nineteenth century, walk-in camera obscura structures were erected in American and European parks and places of natural beauty so that people could experience the phenomenon of seeing projected images of nature as part of their immersive experience. As with perspective, this way of viewing was not simply a technique but part of a larger episteme. Art historian Jonathan Crary has written that the camera obscura is a central factor in the reorganization and reconstitution of the subject from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. The viewer standing inside a camera obscura has a different relation to images than the viewer of a two-dimensional image, precisely because one physically stands inside the apparatus to see the view it offers. This is what Crary calls an “interiorized observer to an exterior world.”¹⁸ This orientation gives the camera obscura, according to Crary, a distinct phenomenological difference from the perspective system. Its embodied experience is quite different from that of looking at a two-dimensional image. The camera obscura was a philosophical model for two centuries, Crary states, “in both rationalist and empiricist thought, of how observation leads to truthful inferences about the world.”¹⁹ The camera obscura affirms empiricism’s basic tenets, including how scientific and objective truths derive from physical observation of controlled experiments.

Although the camera obscura’s influence had a long history, in the nineteenth century it was transformed from a metaphor of truth to a metaphor of that which conceals or inverts truth, as the camera obscura structure inverts light. Karl Marx, for instance, regarded the way that the camera obscura inverts light as a metaphor for how bourgeois ideology inverts the actual relations of labor and capital. Capitalism, Marx argued, like the camera obscura, substitutes appearance for reality.

Camera obscuras were also found in artists’ studios, where they were used as a drawing instrument, much like the perspectival grid. In *Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters*, the contemporary artist David Hockney (in collaboration with physicist Charles M. Falco) put forward a highly controversial thesis that certain painters, from the Dutch Masters (painters of the seventeenth-century Baroque period) to French neoclassical artists such as Ingres, used devices including camera obscuras and concave mirrors to achieve more realist depictions.²⁰ In the painting *Lady at the Virginals with a Gentleman* (fig. 4.18) by Johannes Vermeer, an artist known for his refined depiction of light and the detailed textures of cloth, wood, and glass, there is a somewhat distorted perspective and highlights that are suspected by Hockney and Falco to be artifacts



FIG. 4.18

Johannes Vermeer, *Lady at the Virginals with a Gentleman (The Music Lesson)*, 1662–1666 (oil on canvas, 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ ")

from Vermeer's use of optical instruments such as a camera obscura or a curved mirror. Although some art historians contest the Hockney-Falco thesis about the Dutch Masters' use of such devices, experimentation with lenses and viewing devices was common during this era. Vermeer's friend and the executor of his bankrupt estate was Antony van Leeuwenhoek, the Delft fabric merchant who ground his own lenses to make simple homemade microscopes used to magnify living

organisms. Van Leeuwenhoek, who early in his career worked with mirrors, was one of the first microbiologists.

Putting aside the debate about the accuracy of the Hockney-Falco thesis, it is important to note that the value of a work is affected by the instruments and techniques used to make it. This may seem surprising in our present time when seeing through visual instruments and displacing authority from the body to the instrument is taken for granted. Many artists and scientists accepted these techniques in Vermeer's time as well. Yet the objections to the thesis are based not only on evidence about practice but also on skepticism about the idea that a fine artist of that era would resort to tricks. There may also be concern about the value of these paintings in light of the possibility that their makers used visual technologies more extensively than had been believed. The idea that an original fine art painting's value resides in its nonmechanical nature—the fact that it is made by hand and by the distinct eye of the artist, and not with the help of machines—hangs on in art history even as instruments of reproduction, such as computers, are routinely used to make art that is collected, regarded as museum-worthy, and gains in value in the twenty-first-century fine art market.

Challenges to Perspective

Perspective in its more traditional forms has, throughout its long history, remained tied to the idea of technology and an objective depiction of reality. However, some art historians have noted that human vision is infinitely more complex than is suggested by the model of a stationary viewer before a world organized around a system of lines giving form to space. When we look, our eyes are in constant motion, and any sight we have is the composite of different views and glances.

With this idea of the motion and oscillation of looking in mind, some artists working in styles of modern art after the invention of photography defied perspective. Impressionists, for instance, used visible brushstrokes and impressionistic depictions of light to capture human vision differently. Impressionists shifted their focus from line to light and color, aiming for a visual spontaneity that some critics have compared to photography. Impressionist painters rendered landscapes through the empirical experience of being in nature, observing and subjectively recording the light and color changes they experienced during the painting session. Claude Monet's painting *Impression, Sunrise* (1872) is reported to have inspired a French critic to coin the term *Impressionism*, mocking the new approach. Impressionism was greeted, as many changes in representational style are, as a disturbing way of looking, prompting some French cartoonists to quip that the images would cause pregnant women to miscarry.

Monet examined the process of looking by painting the same scene repeatedly in a series to show subtle changes in light and color over time. These series include paintings of the Rouen Cathedral at different times of day and renderings of the movement and variation of light and color patterns among the water lilies floating in his garden's pond at Giverny. He made numerous paintings of the Gare St. Lazare train station in Paris, each capturing the pattern of light specific to that time of day. Whereas many Impressionist works depict bucolic landscapes and pastoral scenes, these images of the Gare St. Lazare evoke the bustling new modern world of industrial landscapes. In works such as these, Monet demonstrated the complexity of human vision and depicted it as a fluid process that interacts with nature. Renaissance figures such as Brunelleschi sought the objective laws of nature and trusted instruments over sensory information, turning to line to give primary shape to a painting's form. Impressionists such as Monet emphasized the sensory, embodied, empirical experience of seeing as a process through which nature could be felt with the senses and used light, color, and pattern to suggest fleeting impressions of form. The train station never looks the same; it comes into being through not simply one set view but many impressions. The act of seeing is thus



FIG. 4.19
Claude Monet, *La Gare Saint-Lazare*, 1877 (oil on canvas)



FIG. 4.20
Claude Monet, *Arrival of the Normandy Train, Gare Saint-Lazare*, 1877 (oil on canvas, 59.6 × 80.2 cm)



FIG. 4.21

Georges Braque, *Woman with a Guitar*, 1913 (oil on canvas, 130 × 73 cm)

established in these works as active, changing, never fixed; here, vision is a process.

Beginning around 1907, the Spanish painter Pablo Picasso and the French painter Georges Braque became interested in depicting objects from several different points of view simultaneously. Out of this interest emerged Cubism, an approach to form in which perspective lines are bent and spatial planes are fragmented and dislocated to suggest movement over time. Cubism deliberately challenged the dominant perspective model of absolute form by breaking up the planes of perspectival space into different views, collected together on one canvas. These paintings proclaim that the human eye is never at rest but is always in motion.

The Cubists painted objects as if they were being viewed from several different angles simultaneously, with surfaces colliding and intersecting at unexpected angles. The coherence and unity of perspectival depth is thus

shattered and pieced back together in surprising and confusing ways. The spectator is led to focus on the disunity of the painterly space, contrasting it with the compositional unity of earlier painting styles. In Georges Braque's *Woman with a Guitar*, realistic space and light have been discarded for a kinetic view of ordinary objects and labels through different angles and fragments. The painting suggests a woman playing a guitar at a café table, with newspapers and bottles in view. But the scene is a composite of different glances at the same scene. Compare this painting to the eighteenth-century still life by Henri-Horace Roland de la Porte discussed in Chapter 1 (Fig. 1.7). Each is a still life, but Braque's defies the unified perspective of de la Porte's realist image. Whereas the de la Porte situates the spectator in a particular standpoint before the image, the Braque offers restless views, putting the spectator in constant motion. The Cubists were interested in creating not a fantasy world but rather new ways of experiencing the real. As Friedberg notes, Cubism's fragmented planes condense cinematic time, collapsing multiple planes into one.

Pablo Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907) is one of the most famous examples of the Cubist style. Picasso, like many other European artists of this period, was influenced by the African sculptures and masks that were newly displayed in Paris museums during this period of French colonial expansion into Africa. This painting demonstrates how the distinct abstraction of the body in African art

FIG. 4.22

Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O Version O)*, 1907 (oil on canvas, 8' x 7'8")

was borrowed and recoded in the colonial period. It is not incidental to the meaning of the painting, of course, that it, like the Braque painting, depicts women. In the case of the Picasso, the women present defiant, if not hostile, faces to the spectator.

The relationship of modern artists to the aesthetic styles of African art, called at the time “primitive” art, has been the source of much debate, in particular around issues of colonialist appropriation and authorship.²¹ Picasso’s painting was the signature work in the 1984 Museum of Modern Art exhibition in New York titled *‘Primitivism’ in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*. The show presented the work of European modernists alongside the work of African artists that may have inspired them, yet the African art was presented without artist names or dates. Critics of the exhibition argued that this presentation format was itself a form of colonialism, Eurocentrically coopting the African work without attribution.

This nineteenth-century Fang mask, made by an artisan in Zaire, is displayed at the Louvre in the Pavillon des Sessions, a space featuring a small selection of the half-million objects from Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas held by the Musée du Quai Branly. The mask was used for a nineteenth-century Ngil ceremony, an inquisition for sorcerers. It is similar to the types of masks Picasso saw in Paris during the time he painted *Les Femmes d'Alger (O Version O)*. Picasso borrowed—without attribution—the abstract styles that were



FIG. 4.23

Carved wood mask used by the Fang, a male secret society that sought out sorcerers in Gabon villages during the nineteenth century





FIG. 4.24

Giorgio de Chirico, *Melancholy and Mystery of a Street*, 1914 (oil on canvas, 27½ × 33½")

traditional in Zaire but regarded pejoratively as primitive in colonial France. Paradoxically, the “primitive” was adopted to make a style promoted as modern and forward-looking.

Challenges to the fixed perspective system can also be found in works that use perspective as a source of metaphor and symbolism. In the 1914 painting by Giorgio de Chirico titled *Melancholy and Mystery of a Street*, the Italian artist uses different forms of perspective to render public spaces enigmatic. An urban public space should be teeming with humanity at this time of day, but the child playing in the square is disturbingly alone. The shadow of a statue, a figure of civic pride, looms menacingly from behind a massive façade that blocks the sun and the square, throwing the painting’s foreground into a darkness that consumes even

the implied position of the spectator outside the frame. The steeply converging lines of a wall meet in a near vanishing point that is misaligned with the perspective of the harshly lit walkway along the hidden square, with its fifteen archways and eye-like windows receding toward a vanishing point somewhere deep in the painting, blocked

by the imposing wall. What waits around the corner is uncertain. The girl runs in the direction of a covered wagon parked in the shadows, its doors propped invitingly open.

This painting is an example of de Chirico’s metaphysical style in which he uses perspective to suggest anxiety about what may unfold in Italy’s civic spaces. As Keala Jewell writes, de Chirico refuses what is nostalgic and heroic about urban space and its monuments, instead using a metaphysical approach to suggest foreboding about the future that will unfold in Italy’s ancient squares.²² Like the Cubists, de Chirico shows fragmented, contradictory views from different standpoints in time, all at once. But unlike the Cubists, he uses a multiplicity of views to invoke uncertainty and link civic memories of a classical past to anticipation of an uncertain future in a country that would see the launch of the National Fascist Party within a decade.

But meanings are not intrinsic or fixed over time. The de Chirico painting we have discussed inspired the image template for *Ico*, the 2001 video game designed by Fumito Ueda and released by Sony for PlayStation. *Ico*’s makers departed from the visual style of many video games of the period by emphasizing design over gameplay features. The game acquired a cult status in part for its arty aesthetic and its suggestion of mystery. De Chirico’s conventions, which carried strong political meanings, were transposed into the game as pure style, offering a journey through a fantasy landscape.

The longevity of traditional linear perspective suggests a cultural desire for vision to be stable and unchanging and for the meanings of images to be fixed. Yet we see from this example that perspective has been used, challenged, altered, and multiplied in its forms and meanings. Rational objectivity may be an accurate general characterization of the modern episteme, but the mobilization of the seeing subject and these modern avant-garde movements indicate that we should take note of the many alternative spatial paradigms. Artists working in Impressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism emphasized the status of perspective and its worldview as always culturally situated, determined by the social and political landscapes that shape representation.

In painting, photography, and film spanning the 1910s through the 1960s, many modernist artists questioned representational traditions organized around the model of the Cartesian subject as the fixed center of the pictorial world. As we saw in the case of Gabo, for some artists form was the content itself, the subject matter of the reflexive artwork. Some artists shifted the emphasis from the painting as a document or rendering of something else to the painting as a document of the painter's own empirical, physical, and emotional experience in marking the canvas. In these works that reflect on process, the work of art records the artist's embodied activity. The drip-and-splash "action painting" that became the American abstract expressionists' trademark style demonstrates this approach. To create paintings such as the one under construction here, Helen Frankenthaler placed her canvas on the floor and walked around its perimeter, vigorously pouring and spreading paint onto the surface in broad gestures.

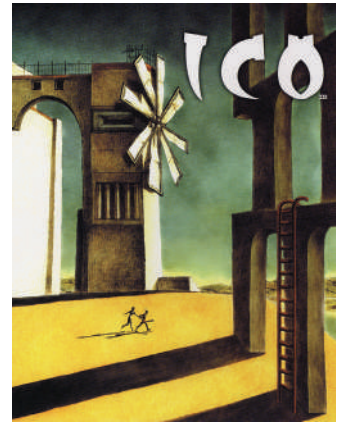


FIG. 4.25
Ico video game cover, Fumito Ueda, 2001



FIG. 4.26
Helen Frankenthaler at work on a large canvas, 1969, photograph by Ernst Haas.

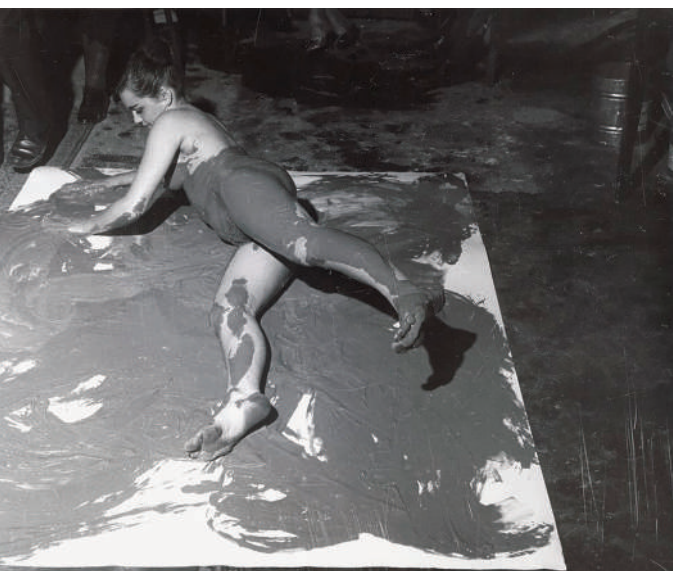


FIG. 4.27

Yves Klein, first experiments with “Living Brushes,” Robert Godet’s apartment, 9 rue Le-Regrattier, Île Saint-Louis, Paris, June 5, 1958

The action painting of artists such as Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner drew from the techniques of the Mexican social realist mural painter David Alfaro Siqueiros as well as from the Surrealist interest in automatism, a technique of writing, drawing, and painting in which the producer marks the surface with spontaneous gestures, without concern about aesthetic results. The idea was that this gestural technique would result in more direct impressions, providing an uncensored release of

emotion without passing through the codes of symbolism and ideas. The spectator would in turn feel these emotions by contemplating the turbulent lines and shapes. These paintings were given generic names because they did not represent or symbolize anything beyond the painting itself and its process of being made.

Concept, process, and performance were essential concerns of many modernist artists. Conceptual art involved the production of works in which the idea or concept was more important than the visual product. Some artworks were in fact devoid of pictures, containing only words. The French painter Yves Klein combined the conceptual approach with process, performance, and action-based painting. Rather than making the canvas a record of his own bodily action, he instructed nude female models to roll in a single color of paint (a hard, bright royal blue) and then had them drag their bodies over canvases before live audiences to the accompaniment of a musical composition he called the “Monotone Symphony” (one sustained chord). The resulting canvases were then displayed in galleries. The process of making the work was also a work of art in itself—these were works of performance art staged before audiences.

This kind of work subverted the older realist tradition of “painting from life” in which studio artists painted posed nude models. Klein took the body of the model and used it to imprint the canvas, as if the nude female body was an artist’s tool, one big brush. These imprints are highly abstract, devoid of representational conventions such as foreshortening, shading, line, variation in color and tone, and perspective. The work’s title, *Anthropometry of the Blue Period*, directly evokes the nineteenth-century scientific practice of measuring bodies to derive information about normalcy, health, and intellect (we discuss these practices further in Chapter 9). These images interpellate the spectator in a way that does not invite identification or pleasure in the typical sense. Rather, they invite us to think about the physical materiality of the body and the paint, the “having been there” of a nude body that rolled in the viscous paint, and the idea of the painting being made



FIG. 4.28

Yves Klein, *Anthropometry of the Blue Period (ANT 82)*, 1960 (pure pigment and synthetic resin on paper laid down on canvas, 156.5 × 282.5 cm)

not by the hand of the artist but by the flesh of the model, who is a laborer, performing at the behest of the artist.

For the 1950s, this was a radical approach to organizing pictorial space because it broke dramatically with the idea that paintings are meant to represent what we see. Even Impressionist paintings offered a semblance of a scene. Klein's paintings were so notorious that the particular color of paint he used became widely recognized as "Yves Klein Blue." He even patented the color under the name International Klein Blue, although it was never commercially manufactured (he died at age thirty-four, before this and other ideas were realized).

Klein's process paintings were later taken up critically in the work of the Cuban-American artist Ana Mendieta, a performance and earthworks artist of the 1970s and 1980s. Mendieta produced a number of works in outdoor spaces in which the traces of her body are impressed upon the landscape. In the *Siluetas* series photograph reproduced here, Mendieta made her physical imprint in soft earth, then sprinkled and outlined the form, much like a crime scene would be marked, using blood-red pigment. The work was then documented in photographs.

The emulsions of some of the photographs documenting these earthworks are marked with scratches and treated with color



FIG. 4.29

Ana Mendieta, *Untitled: Silueta Series, Mexico*, 1976 (chromogenic print)



FIG. 4.30

David Hockney, *Pearblossom Hwy., 11–18th April 1986, #2, 1986* (photographic collage, 71½ × 107")

using hand-applied techniques. In these pieces, Mendieta critically reworked the representation of the female body—its overinscription in paintings by men, as well as the absence from history books of discussion about works made by

women artists.²³ Mendieta's imprints, which show that a body has been present, are signifiers of absence, reminding the looker of the historical erasure of women artists. Klein used the female nude as a living surrogate for his hand and brush in a process that may be criticized for doubly exploiting women by appropriating their labor and their nude bodies. Mendieta used her own body to mark a space of absence, removing her physical body from the scene but leaving symbolic residues as its trace, refusing the spectator's gaze at her features while also documenting evidence of her past labor and making obvious her absence in a scene that powerfully suggests crime and death. This reference became powerfully evocative when in 1985 Mendieta fell to her death from the window of her New York apartment, where she was with her husband, the sculptor Carl Andre, who was tried for her murder. His acquittal was surrounded by controversy.

Work of the 1980s took further the idea that a perspective-based view of the world is actually only one of the many different ways of representing human vision. For instance, in a photo collage of 1986, David Hockney composed an image of a desert intersection through many snapshots taken from different positions. Hockney's composition suggests that this mundane roadside is experienced not in one view but in many fleeting views from different perspectives over time. It is not just one viewer who contemplates this scene from multiple perspectives, but perhaps hundreds or thousands of viewers who catch a fleeting, mobile glimpse of it as they drive by it once or perhaps as they pass it on their commute multiple times in a day, week, or month. His image is a portrait of the vibrancy of everyday vision and the fleeting and serial nature of modern seeing on the go.

Perspective in Digital Media

Realism's codes and conventions continued to change in light of digital visual technologies. Digital imaging presents new modes through which the viewer can experience a multiplicity of perspectives on a multiplicity of virtual worlds within the same screen. Video games brought to the experience of viewing images new kinds of perspectives and interactions with other players and with the technology

itself. The emphasis on the phenomenological experience of the producer's body that is so evident in Klein and Pollock's modernist paintings is apparent in video game culture as well. As Raiford Guins notes, we buy video games primarily to play them, not to view or collect them. The video game was introduced after World War II in amusement devices that incorporated the kinds of display screens used in radar technology. In the earliest video games, analog devices were used to control the trajectory of mobile shapes on a screen. Some of these early games featured military themes in which the objective was to maneuver shapes to strike fixed targets literally drawn on the screen. In the early 1970s, coin-operated video games were installed in arcades as a form of popular amusement.²⁴

One of video games' key aspects is the level and degree of interaction the form offers with the technology and with other viewers in the constructed space of an onscreen world. Unlike a movie or television program, which unfolds before our eyes without required interaction (beyond pushing buttons on the remote), video games typically require viewers to navigate game elements in particular ways or to interact with other users. One's activity drives the game, and there is a strong sense of invitation into the onscreen world. Perspective is a major factor in the successful creation of the world in which a given game takes place.

Video game discourse emphasizes activity and narrative time as key aspects of engagement with games. For this reason, the term *player* has become far more commonplace than *viewer* or *user* because it connotes physical, embodied experience with something beyond the delimited sensory experience of looking. As digital media theorist Noah Wardrip-Fruin has noted, video games offer an active world, one of play.²⁵ Media theorist Alexander Galloway emphasizes the importance of activity in the game experience as well: "if photographs are images, and films are moving images, then *video games are actions*."²⁶ We are reminded of Pollock's action painting, in which the emphasis is on embodied movement and not what the canvas looks like. Galloway continues, "with video games, the work itself is material action. One *plays* a game. And the software *runs*. The operator and the machine play the video game together, step by step, move by move." The actual images of any video game are thus determined in part by the player's actions. This emphasis on action terms suggests that the visual episteme of the digital game-culture era emphasizes viewer engagement with technologies of seeing and experiencing as they immerse us in image worlds.

Whereas some games are designed for special game consoles, a vast array of contemporary games are designed for computers, tablets, and mobile phones. Players may engage with a large number of other players in virtual space in forums such as MMOGs (massively multiplayer online games). Many games, like *The Sims* and *Minecraft*, emphasize building and designing one's own environments and worlds, while others offer built environments in which one immerses oneself.

Studies of game culture, even prior to computing, largely focused on traditionally masculine pastimes—sports, warfare, politics, and so on—a tendency



FIG. 4.31

From *Lara Croft and the Temple of Osiris*, an isometric sequel developed by Crystal Dynamics and published by Square Enix, 2014

apparent in Johan Huizinga's classic 1938 study on play culture, *Homo Ludens*, in which law, war, and contest are discussed but dress-up is given short shrift.²⁷ The feminist game studies collective Ludica situates video games within the broader history of play, proposing alternative methods for understanding game

culture and the ways games are designed, tested, and marketed. Under the name Ludica, game designers and scholars Janine Fron, Tracy Fullerton, Jacqueline Ford Morie, and Celia Pearce have written essays that have become manifestos in the game studies world. In "The Hegemony of Play," Ludica describes game culture's "elephant in the room": the fact that the game industry's power elite is predominantly white, secondarily Asian, and male.²⁸ This hegemonic (politically dominant) elite, they explain, determines which technologies will be used, which players are important to design for, who will design games, and what sorts of games will be made. They criticize the industry's boys-only ethos and its treatment of women, who often are treated as outsiders, given demeaning roles not only in games but also in the industry (marginalized in workplace culture or hired as "booth babes" at industry expos, for example). Polls and reviews of the "hottest" and "sexiest" female video game characters were still quite common in the media of the field in 2015, with the English archaeologist Lara Croft, created by Core Design, described as not only "3D gaming's first female superstar" but also "an embodiment of male fantasies."²⁹ Noting a study showing that in 2007 women made up 38 percent of the video game market, Ludica considers why it is that the industry has sys-

tematically marginalized women workers and reduced women characters to male fantasies. They propose that it may be the social structures built into software technology that shape this exclusion. They review the history of the design, testing, and marketing of nineteenth- and twentieth-century board games, showing that in fact women made frequent



FIG. 4.32

Jade in *Beyond Good and Evil*, dir. Michel Ancel for Ubisoft, 2003

and active contributions to this predigital game market as designers, game-testers, patent-holders, and substantial characters in a world that was less rife with the kind of exclusion and debasement of women one finds in the contemporary game industry. Ludica thus proposes revisions to the computer gaming world on the model of the analog board game era, with the aim of making the industry more diverse, inclusive, and welcoming. In another important essay, the collective discusses thematic dress-up play, including real-world cosplay and reenactment, as important but overlooked practices informing video game politics.³⁰ They emphasize that costume, on screen and off, is not simply optional personal self-expression within a fantasy world but is deeply tied to the gendered and racialized options given in any given fantasy world. Prescribed by the usually limited fantasies of mostly male designers, female characters are circumscribed by design, as evidenced by the preponderance of scantily clad female characters with idealized figures that populate game worlds. Players may intervene in these codes through performatively appropriating and remaking identity with and against the skins and clothing styles offered in games' fantasy worlds, but options are limited. Female characters who exercise agency, who are not constructed as "babes," and who are friends (not competitors) with other women are few in number. Consider Jade, the capable photojournalist created for *Beyond Good and Evil* by Ubisoft's Michael Ancel. Jade, who appears here in tactical gear wielding her camera, is widely remarked upon as one of the few heroines who is not just "eye candy"—and who therefore is often overlooked in reviews of popular female characters.³¹ Her look is seemingly deliberately racially ambiguous, leading players to speculate on blogs about whether she is black, Greek, Latina, Asian, or Eurasian. By emphasizing dress, skin, and appearance over space design, Ludica draws our attention back to the body, its design, and its adornment as important elements in a field where "the world" and its perspectival construction has been the dominant focus of concern among fans and critics alike.

One game technique that foregrounds the body is the use of simulated point-of-view shots which situate the player in relation to the experience of moving through space. We may be reminded of Bazin's interest in staging cinematic action in deep space as a strategy of realism. In his influential book *Language of New Media*, Lev Manovich stresses that late twentieth-century video games and computer graphics consistently invoke cinematic ways of composing screen space in depth and motion.³² Many video games are designed to give the player the sense of a single point of view with which one may identify. But the point of view in games is also mobile. The point-of-view shot convention has a long history in both cinema and comic books as a means through which the viewer is afforded the experience of seeing through a mobile character's eyes. Sometimes in cinema this convention has been used to show a character's subjective (usually altered) perception. Pursuit is a common theme for point-of-view sequences in video games. First-person shooter (FPS) games typically position the viewer behind a weapon with the screen displaying prospective targets, for example.

The look of video games is also crucial to the worlds that they help users to imagine. Video games offer many different kinds of perspectives all at once and do not always follow geometric linear perspective conventions. One way of seeing that is built into some video games is isometric, or axonometric, projection, a technique that may be discussed with reference to the various forms of perspective present in the de Chirico painting. Forms rendered in isometric perspective are presented as flattened. The lines describing each plane do not converge; there is no vanishing point. Isometric rendering is often used when one frame is embedded in another, as in some video games, comic books, and graphic novels.

In video games of the early 2000s, isometric perspective was a common feature used to introduce movement through screen space as a new aspect of realism. In *The Sims 1*, for instance, scenes had a flattened effect as one moved through them, especially apparent when viewed from above. Whereas the classical linear perspective of painting granted the viewer a fixed view on a given scene, isometric perspective offered the chance to move around a scene in first-person view and zoom out omnisciently without the distortion that a constantly shifting vanishing point would produce. In later versions of games such as *The Sims*, one can typically move through a scene maintaining 3D views without distortion even as perspective systems and orientation shift. There is no longer just one standard system for representing space. Because *The Sims* is a “sandbox” game, Simblrs can also make over the standard figures and default scenes offered in game and expansion packs.

In this Black Lives Matter rally pack created by EbonixSimblr, for example, custom content includes figure poses, clothing, hair, and body shape in meshes that can be shared and adapted by other Simblrs. The effect is not just to represent the Black Lives Matter movement but also to make it live in the worlds of *The Sims*, where

FIG. 4.33

Sims image by EbonixSimblr, produced for the Black Lives Matter *Sims* Rally organized by @circasim and @simflux, June 1, 2016

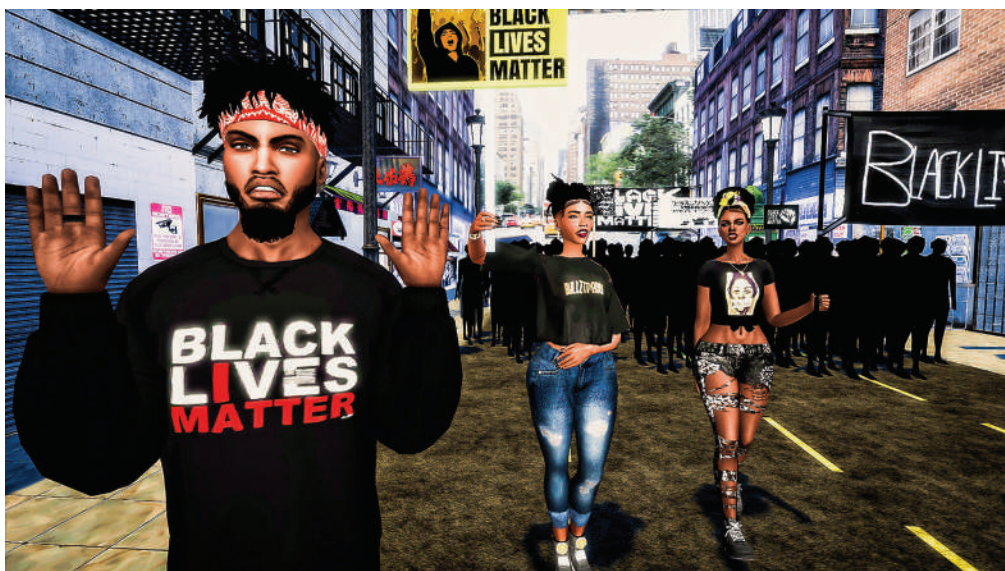


FIG. 4.34

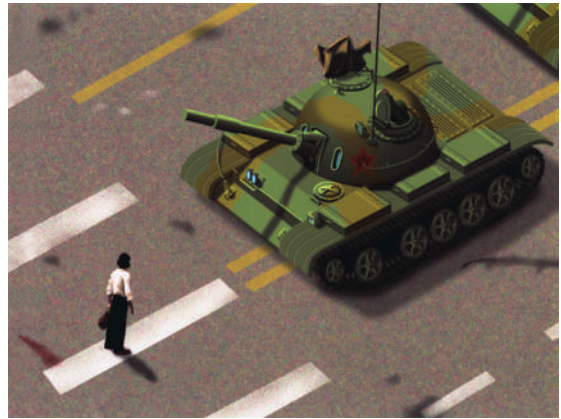
Jon Haddock, Wang Weilen -
Screenshot Series, 2000, edition of
3 (chromogenic print, 22.5 × 30")

other Simblrs may use the custom designs to create their own scenes and adapt the custom meshes to new figures, extending the movement. As EbonixSimblr writes (quoting Gil Scott-Heron), “the revolution will not be televised. It will be live.”

In a series produced in 2000, artist Jon Haddock juxtaposes traditional and isometric perspective by taking scenes from famous photographs of historical events in world politics and rendering them like a video game shot. He calls these works “isometric screenshots.” The photograph of a Chinese student stopping a tank, the “tank man” image, that became an icon of the Tiananmen Square uprising (discussed in Chapter 1; Fig. 1.27) is rendered by Haddock into the flat perspective of a video game circa 2000 (fig. 4.34). In Haddock’s image, the original photograph is reconceived through the conventions of isometric perspective, uncannily transforming the image into what looks like an early video game still. The figures seem to be placed on the flat background of the street. In transposing photographic images into isometric perspective, Haddock is pointing to both systems of looking as conventions of realism, both the original photographic view and its isometric remake.

Video games are composed of virtual images. A common misconception about the term *virtual* is that it means “not real,” or that it refers to something that exists in our imaginations only. There is also a misconception that whereas actual or representational images are produced through analog technologies, virtual images are produced through digital technologies and are specific to their era. In fact, virtual images are by definition images that break with the convention of representing what is seen, and they can be analog as well as digital. They are simulations that represent ideal or constructed, rather than actual, conditions. A virtual image of a human body may represent no actual body in particular but may be based on a composite or simulation of human bodies drawn from various sources. For example, we can describe Dürer’s composite bodies of Adam and Eve (Fig. 4.15) as virtual insofar as no one look and no specific bodies were the source of this seemingly realist view. The realism of the virtual stems from its ideal or composite elements, not correspondence with an actual referent.

Virtual, simulated images are central to the use of special effects in cinema. Most contemporary films use some form of digital special effects, even when they are not readily obvious, for instance in crowd scenes. They thus represent virtual worlds that are simulated on the screen. This is perhaps most obvious in films that use computer-generated images along with live actors to represent worlds that do



not exist, such as the *Star Wars* films, or that mix live action with animation, such as *The Lego Movie* (2014), which we discuss in Chapter 8.

Although we understand that actors in animated films do not perform their characters through image (they voice the character), we enjoy the simulation of interaction nonetheless. The film's world, even as experienced by the actors themselves, is thus very much a virtual world. Virtual technologies, though, are devoted to making much more than fantasy narratives. Their products include the mundane, real-world augmentations of reality through devices such as pacemakers and hearing aids. They also include simulations that parallel what we think of as the real world, such as flight simulation training systems and game systems used to train people to act in warfare and other contexts, inviting users to enter a simulated or imagined world on multiple sensory levels. Simulations and virtual reality systems incorporate computer imaging, sound, and sensory systems to put the player's body in a direct feedback loop with the technology itself and the world it simulates. The aim of such systems is to allow subjectivity to be experienced in and through the technology. Rather than offering a world to simply view and hear, as the cinema does, virtual reality systems create simulations that allow players to feel physically incorporated into the world on all sensory levels, with their bodies linked through prosthetic extensions. In virtual institutions and virtual worlds, like fantasy football, players interact in online environments, using avatars in ways that replicate social structures of the real world through interactions that may be economic, psychological, and even physical, and they may have legal ramifications.

It is important to note that the spaces of virtual technologies, including virtual reality and video games, are distinct from traditional, material Cartesian space. As we discussed before, Cartesian space, as defined by René Descartes, is a physical, three-dimensional space that can be mathematically measured. In contrast, virtual space, or the space created by electronic and digital technologies, cannot be mathematically measured and mapped. The term "virtual space" thus refers to spaces that appear like physical space but do not conform to the laws of either physical or Cartesian space. Computer programs often encourage us to think of these spaces as akin to real-world physical spaces. Yet virtual space is a dramatic change in the forms of representation, space, and images.

We live in an image environment that is dramatically different from the world of Renaissance perspective, Enlightenment rationalism, and twentieth-century modern worldviews that adapted perspective to different ends. Indeed, one of the shaping characteristics of contemporary visual culture is our insistence on adopting a multiplicity of views, screens, and contemporaneous fields of action simultaneously as we negotiate our lives. When we work on the computer, we are accustomed to looking at and moving between multiple screens and experiencing many different perspectives all at once. Since the development of the graphical user interface (GUI) of contemporary personal computers in the mid-1980s, in which computer



FIG. 4.35

Screen shot from the video game *Minecraft*, created by Markus Persson and developed by Mojang, 2009

information has been increasingly visualized through icons, the contemporary computer user is connected back through the history of systems of looking. Anne Friedberg writes,

in the mixed metaphor of the computer screen, the computer user is figuratively positioned with multiple spatial relations to the screen. 'Windows' stack *in front of* each other . . . or *on top of* each other . . . on the fractured plane of the computer screen. The metaphor of the window has retained a key stake in the technological reframing of the visual field. The Windows interface is a postcinematic visual system, but the viewer-turned-user remains in front of . . . a perpendicular frame.³³

The computer screen's frame thus offers a new kind of seeing that, like Cubism, engages many screens and offers many standpoints all at once.

In recent years, a cubic aesthetic has emerged as a popular form in digital media culture. With their roots in Lego aesthetics and highly pixelated early computer graphics, popular world-building games such as *Minecraft* deploy a graphic style that incorporates isometric perspective with an aesthetic of block building (Fig. 4.35). Computer images are composed of pixels, or picture elements, that are the smallest elements within a computer graphics system. Early computer games such as *Pac Man* were created with relatively crude imaging systems that looked pixelated. As imaging systems have become higher in definition, we see the actual pixels less. Ironically, however, this new array of games, of which *Minecraft* is the most popular, use a kind of pixelated aesthetic to create world-building environments. We may think of these forms as digital Legos. *Minecraft*'s worlds and figures are almost deliberately crude, almost like the crude Lego figures that now proliferate in games and on screens.

Minecraft was created in 2009 by Swedish game designers. Its blocky aesthetics is central to its modes of building and also to its distinct visual style, as even its characters (human, monster, animal) are made of blocky pixel-like units called

voxels, or volumetric pixels, a term that refers to the three-dimensional 8-bit pixel style. The voxel block style derived initially from the limitations of computer imaging in the 1990s, when the blocky style acquired an aesthetic status. Like Lego, *Minecraft* invites its players to create landscapes, structures, and worlds using textured blocks. *Minecraft* is an open world game, with no dictated goals to achieve, and its popularity is related to its potential to build worlds using this simple unit.

One of the key features of *Minecraft*'s style is its use of space, in particular the capacity to create deep space, where elements that are in the foreground and in the background are simultaneously realized. We can see in this aesthetic style a connection to the Italian Neorealist style, in which realism is depicted through long takes and action in deep space, so that the viewer can see elements in focus deep within the frame as well as close up. *Minecraft* likewise has a deep space aesthetic, in which the user has a sense of a world that moves deep into the frame.

We began this chapter by explaining that perspective is both a method and a metaphor for an episteme that reflects the Enlightenment rationalist worldview. Rather than seeing in perspective the roots of a system of ever more perfect machines that reproduce seeing based on an ideal that locates agency and subjectivity in the unitary body, we might say that perspective is a hybrid system that encompasses the body of the artist, drawing materials and technologies, the activity of drawing or programming, a referent or imagined scene or body, and players or viewers. This network of multiple human and nonhuman actors, objects, and technologies generates a worldview. The perspectival image, in this expanded view, is not just a metaphor, a reflection of the world, or a model of thought. Rather, the perspectival image is an element with agency in its own right, engaging with us in our world. The multiple perspectives offered by contemporary imaging systems provide potential for new ways of seeing and sensing the world. In the following chapter we discuss the role of visual technologies and reproduction as a key factor in this hybridized, multi-perspective worldview.

Notes

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3. Lawrence Alloway, quoted by Donald Kuspit in "Pop Art: A Reactionary Realism," *Art Journal* 36, no. 1 (Autumn 1976): 31.
4. Kuspit, "Pop Art," 31–38.

5. Kuspit, "Pop Art," 31–38.
6. Joseph Backstein, "Bulldozer: The Underground Exhibition That Revolutionized Russia's Art Scene," in *Calvert Journal*, September 15, 2014, <http://calvertjournal.com/comment/show/3090/bulldozer-exhibition-moscow-soviet-union-joseph-backstein>.
7. André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, Vol. 1, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
8. Antonio Manetti, *The Life of Brunelleschi*, trans. Catherine Enggass (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1970).
9. Leon Battista Alberti, from *On Painting*, excerpted in H. W. Janson and Anthony Janson, *History of Art: The Western Tradition*, 6th ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001), 612.
10. Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).
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12. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (New York: Penguin, 1972), 18.
13. Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986).
14. Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 110.
15. Batchen, *Burning with Desire*, 111.
16. Albrecht Dürer, from the book manuscript for *The Book on Human Proportions*, excerpted in H. W. Janson and Anthony Janson, *History of Art: The Western Tradition*, 6th ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001), 620.
17. Leonardo da Vinci, *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, ed. Edward McCurdy (New York: George Brazillier, 1958), 854, <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/5000>.
18. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 34.
19. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 29.
20. David Hockney, *Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters* (New York: Studio, 2001).
21. See the exhibition catalogue, William Rubin, ed., *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, Vols. 1 and 2 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984). Critiques of the exhibition include Thomas McEvilly, "Doctor Lawyer Indian Chief: 'Primitivism in 20th Century Art' at the Museum of Modern Art," *ArtForum* 23, no. 3 (November 1984): 54–61; and Hal Foster, "The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art," *October* 34 (Autumn 1985): 45–70.
22. Keala Jewell, *The Art of Enigma: The de Chirico Brothers and the Politics of Modernism* (State College, PA: Penn State University Press, 2004).
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24. On the history of arcades and game consoles, see Raiford Guins, *Game After: A Cultural Study of Video Game Afterlife* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014).
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33. Friedberg, *The Virtual Window*, 231–32.

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Visual Technologies, Reproduction, and the Copy

Visual culture is always caught up in the world of technology, whether the technology of pencil and paper or the visual technologies of printmaking, photography, or computer imaging software. As Nicholas Mirzoeff writes, “visuality is thus a regime of visualizations, not images.”¹ Visualization is enabled and mediated through technology. In this chapter we consider the reproduction of images and objects, focusing on the technological tools and practices through which visualization operates. We introduce theoretical concepts that help us to understand technological development and change, and we discuss visual technologies in the context of modernity from the early nineteenth century through the early twenty-first century.

Visualization and Technology

Changes in reproduction technologies are embedded in broader shifts in knowledge politics and practices. A new technology’s design and implementation is usually complex and multi-phased, and not the outcome of a single invention or discovery. Technological change is intimately tied to changes in worldview. Different people may use the same technology in different ways, and unintended uses, even “mistakes,” may become common practice. Technologies serve unanticipated ends that are sometimes mundane (e.g., the mobile phone as flashlight) and sometimes profound (e.g., the phone camera used to produce citizen journalism documenting catastrophe or war). Intentions for use may fall away as a technology is adapted or hacked. When the U.S. Department of Defense first implemented the computer communication system called ARPANET in 1969, it did not have in mind the vast and messy system we now call the Internet. The dramatic changes that would be

introduced with the web, including a global e-commerce market, were not fully anticipated in those early years. As we discuss further, technological development is often unpredictable because technology use is difficult to control, shape, and predict. Just as viewers make meaning, so online technology users and media players (authorized and unauthorized) shape the use, design, and redesign of technologies of production and reproduction.

Technology has been widely understood as a force that disrupts nature and everyday life. Literary critic Leo Marx, writing on the cusp of massive computing advances, lamented machines' intrusion into life's natural order and beauty. His 1964 book *The Machine in the Garden* is a classic critique of technology's impact on the modern landscape. For some, trains and tractors, with their sleekness and self-propelled speed, symbolized economic productivity and power. Transportation and the new experience of speed introduced a new mode of visibility. Whereas a horse-drawn coach could go up to fifteen miles per hour, a Civil War-era steam engine could make it up to sixty, sending the passenger catapulting across the pastoral landscape. For Marks, these industrial-era machines clashed with the nineteenth-century pastoral landscape in which they first appeared, mirroring a psychic struggle with industrialization. Consider the nineteenth-century Romantic tradition of European and American landscape painting. The Romantic style unfolded on the cusp of the photography era, which emerged around 1839.

In 1801, the first steam-powered locomotive replaced the horse-drawn trains connecting English coal mines and iron pits to canals and rivers where these raw supplies were transported to factories. The railroad transformed the landscape, rendering it a viewscape through which modern spectators experienced the surging power of industrial modernization.

This 1802 pastoral landscape, titled *Dedham Vale*, hangs in the British Victoria and Albert Museum. It is John Constable's first major work, painted before steam-powered locomotives were introduced to the British countryside. Constable would paint this location over and over throughout his life, much as the Impressionists discussed in Chapter 4 would return to the same scene to paint it again, reflecting changes in lighting and color made visible across the different canvases. The British government has since designated this area a conservation zone and an official "Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty." This



FIG. 5.1
John Constable, *Dedham Vale*,
1802 (oil on canvas
43.5 cm × 34.4 cm)

early painting situates its spectator looking out across a pastoral landscape that is rendered in cool earthy colors with calm lines and gentle lights and darks. Graceful boughs and soft clouds frame two distant towns to which our gaze is led by a waterway that meanders toward the horizon along which rises the gothic tower of Dedham's St. Mary's Church. Made of brown flint and rubble, the structure appears almost as natural as the bark of the trees in the painting's foreground. Constable stayed close to his childhood home on his corn merchant father's land, using these naturalistic techniques to render paintings of a pastoral viewscape that remained relatively unsullied by the industrial development that transformed Britain elsewhere during his lifetime.

Compare *Dedham Vale* to *Rain, Speed and Steam — The Great Western Railway* by J. M. W. Turner, Constable's contemporary who, late in his career, turned his attention to the industrial transformation of the British landscape. Turner's painting, which hangs in the British National Gallery, was painted in 1844, five years after the introduction of photography and six after the launch of the Great Western, the first British railway system. The painting situates its spectator looking east toward London over the Thames, across which the gaze is drawn by the looming diagonals of the Maidenhead Railway Bridge. In *Dedham Vale*, the river draws the eye deep into the composition, toward the details of a town in a pastoral field. In *Rain, Speed and Steam*, a bridge draws our gaze forward out of a city obscured by haze, from background to foreground. Rain, a natural element, and steam, an industrial byproduct, mix in an abstract impasto of oil and pigment. Turner was interested in this mix of materials, even leaving in place dirt that inadvertently made its way onto his canvas. This impasto is cut through by the steam engine, which catapults forward. In the foreground a rabbit appears to flee, perhaps symbolizing the dangers of advancing industrialism.

As in *Las Meninas* (Fig. 3.11), the spectator position in *Rain, Speed and Steam* is rendered unstable. Whereas in the former painting the other Velázquez invites us out the royal chamber's back door into the implied world outside, in this case we are compelled forward, but also to step aside, as if the future might mow us down. If we compare this landscape to Constable's, we can see how the viewscape has been transformed from one in which nature contains culture to one in which technology consumes the pastoral. Turner's impressionistic landscape thus introduces a new kind of vision, one also captured in the motion blur experienced by the railroad passenger who is catapulted across the landscape, looking out a window streaked with rain from the fixed seat of the train. Historian Wolfgang Schivelbush has written about the way that railway travel transformed nineteenth-century vision as passengers experienced a kind of cinematic visuality from the train window.² The building



FIG. 5.2

J. M. W. Turner, *Rain, Speed and Steam — The Great Western Railway*, 1844 (oil on canvas 3' × 4')

of the railway literally transformed landscapes and geographies as well, as hills were flattened to accommodate tracks, and as towns where stations were built prospered in their new status as destinations while mere pass-through towns fell into decline.

Technology studies scholars such as Jacques Ellul have proposed that when advanced technology rushes into all areas of life, it has the capacity to become autonomous—to function independent of human control, to define and even to threaten life. “Technique has taken over the whole of civilization,” writes Ellul, for whom technique includes not only machines’ performance of human labor, but also the technological transformation of organic life.³ To understand this point, consider drones, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), the autonomous aircraft controlled through on-board computers programmed by remote pilots. The U.S. military has been using drones for visual surveillance and bomb strikes in the “war on terror” since 2001. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, an independent organization based in London, has reported that since 2004, over 3,000 people, including at least 475 civilians, have been killed by drone strikes in Pakistan alone. (We discuss one artistic response to the drone war, #notabugsplat, in Chapter 1.) Drones outfitted solely with cameras have also become increasingly popular in the consumer market.

How can we begin to understand shifts in human agency across this long era of machine agency? Some scholars view development in a technologically deterministic light. According to this argument, technology motivates social change. Others have countered technological determinism by arguing that social forces motivate technological change; without human will and direction, technology would not advance. In a classic essay, Langdon Winner addresses debates about machine agency, asking: “Do Artifacts Have Politics?” Rather than answering with a simple yes or no, Winner stresses that technology and culture are interdependent. He also argues that human destruction is not the only potential outcome of a society in which technology acquires agency.⁴ Winner notes, like Ellul, that machines are not neutral conduits for action; social and political perspectives are embedded in machine design, and these perspectives are put into play just by using machines, often without the user’s intention or realization. This concept—that design in itself holds meaning—has been crucial to contemporary research about values in design.⁵

We can see the relevance of this point in the case of the drone, whose programmer is disconnected in time and space from the drone’s act of killing, which the programmer may not in fact witness or be party to in any direct way. But Winner’s point is not that technology always has destructive politics. If ways of seeing, knowing, and acting are built into everyday technologies from drones to cameras, then we need to better understand the political and social dimensions of these technologies and use our machines differently. This is what we were hinting at earlier, when we stated that “mistakes” in machine use may become interventions or even commonplace practice. Painter Addie Wagenknecht, a member of FAT (Free Art Technology) Lab, used drones as paintbrushes to render paintings. In this work of 2008 the brush has traced the drone’s surveillant path in lines and marks on

the canvas. The result is a highly abstract kind of map of the drone's pathway rendered by hand and in paint.

To understand how politics structure technologies, consider the more mundane example of search engines, software programs that help us choose trusted information sources or select goods or services. The particular options offered in any given search are not objectively ranked or neutral choices. Rather, hits are selected and ranked by algorithms according to programmed optimization strategies, prior usage tracking, and other mechanisms that privilege particular choices over others. Algorithms thus shape taste and markets. Companies routinely bid on ad words with search companies such as Google, which then create algorithms to link ads to word-matched queries. Search engine companies make money when a user clicks on an ad. This reflects an ideology of neoliberalism in which value is placed on giving the individual user a wide range of personalized choices in a global economy of information, goods, and services. The choices presented are driven by data about the user's own past consumption. The search technology thus is designed to optimize some choices over others in both a general and a personalized way. The choices presented are contingent on these market dynamics.

In the previous chapter we proposed that perspective reflects era-specific values and notions of truth, the real, and knowledge relative to visibility and the individual human subject's gaze. Those values are reproduced throughout a current episteme, but in that usage perspective changes. Similarly, to use a camera, and to adapt a camera to new ways of making and sharing images, is to shape one's episteme in new ways. With our mobile phones, we may take pictures throughout the day and store or share them through social media. These are archived, whether we intend it or not, and may later be modified, mined, or analyzed by us or by others. We may return to them for family reminiscence that builds an ideology of family values, or we may use them for citizen journalism, inadvertently undermining the journalism-for-pay system. Our images may be used by others—for identity theft or for national security surveillance. Each of these uses involves a different political dynamic not only between human and machine but also among the individual citizen, the community, and the state. Objects and machines do indeed act upon the world through their values and ideologies, and often these are normative, supporting big business and the state. However, understanding this relationship of a technological system to its range of possible uses and its structural power dynamics is one step toward addressing the problem that machines are made autonomous, most of the time, in the service of the state or big business. The "automatic" technology of camera vision has been used to perpetrate but also unmask state violence. It has also been used to generate activist countervisuality, as in the Arab Spring uprising, Occupy Wall Street, and the Black Lives Matter movement.



FIG. 5.3

Addie Wagenknecht, *Black Hawk Paint*, 2008 (acrylic on canvas, 39 × 59")

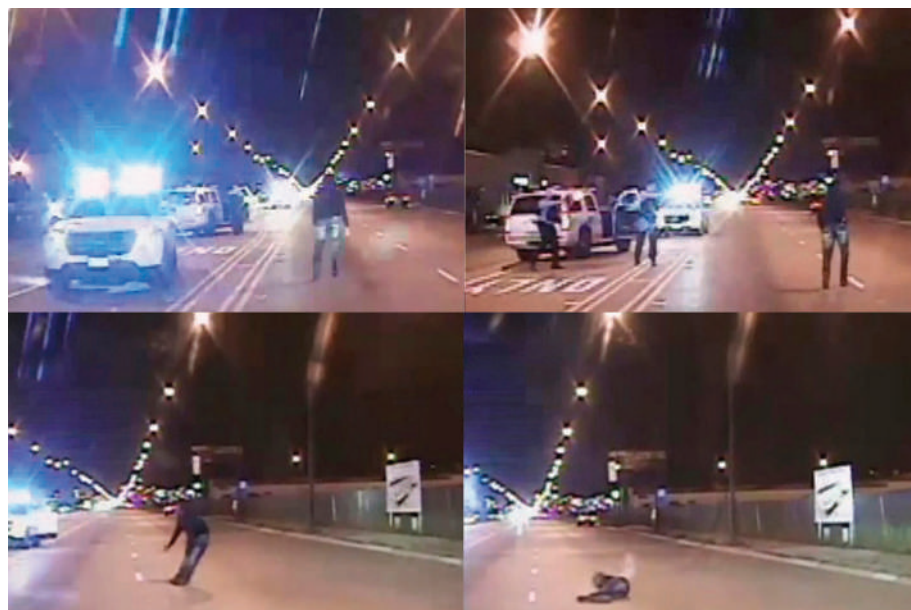
Beginning in the 1980s, science and technology studies scholars insisted that we open the black box of a technological apparatus and examine its inner workings. They argued that we could discern a machine's social schemas by looking at its structure. Understanding the work of designing, making, and using the technological apparatus is, these scholars proposed, as important as understanding what a technology produces. 1980s film theorists similarly proposed that we study the cinematic apparatus rather than focusing exclusively on film texts, stories, and images. Apparatus theory proponents included Jean-Louis Comolli, who proposed that we focus on "machines of the visible," and Jean-Louis Baudry, who defined the cinema as the apparatus of camera, projector, and screen.⁶ They wrote in the wake of the May 1968 student uprisings in France and were motivated by Marxist theorist Louis Althusser, who proposed that we should study capitalism's mode of production and structural system of labor, in order to disarm it. When we study any technology as a social system, we must also consider its range of social uses and consequences.

Winner asked: How do a given technology's structure and function delimit and transform personal experience and social relationships?⁷ This is an important question to ask as we consider how reproduction technologies are used to different and sometimes contested ends. One example of this is surveillance, which we argued in Chapter 3 is often used to exercise panoptic control, shaping the behaviors of those within its autonomous gaze. Yet, in recent police violence in which technology

served as legal evidence, police dashboard and body camera footage has been used to different ends. Dashboard camera footage documenting Jason Van Dyke's killing of teenager Laquan McDonald in Chicago on October 20, 2014, was critical in the jury's verdict that this was an act of murder.

FIG. 5.4

Screen captures from Chicago Police dashcam video showing 2014 killing of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald



But the footage from which these still images were taken had been concealed from the public and the media for over a year. Once released, it was reproduced widely on social media, where it inspired demonstrations locally and nationally. Protesters demanded not only that police be held accountable for their violence but that future evidence suppression be prevented. In a police state, surveillance is not only a means of social control; it is also a potential source of protection and evidence that citizens may use in defense against police abuse. Instruments such as surveillance cameras can be used to expose injustice and spur political change. Technologies are flexible forms that may be used in unanticipated ways.

Visual Technologies

We live in a world filled with images and image-making technologies. Imagine a world without cameras, without, for instance, cameras ready at hand on our mobile phones. Imagine that likenesses and copies had to be executed by hand, rather than with digital or mechanical printing techniques. Imagine seeing without glasses, mirrors, microscopes, and telescopes. Think of living in a world without screens. We have discussed the phenomenon of the original and unique image and its importance in the history of art and visual culture. If we understand visual culture to be concerned with visibility and not just images, our scope of what counts as a visual technology expands. The history of visual technologies takes us from the printing press, the technological devices used to create perspective, the microscope, and the camera obscura to the invention of photography (1839), cinema (1895), television (late 1940s and early 1950s), and digital media and video games (1990s). The development of these different media is often understood in technological deterministic ways, as if the development of the technology made possible particular ways of being. However, we emphasize that it is crucial to see technology in its reciprocal co-production with an era's social values and discourses. Technological developments take hold when they resonate with social needs and values, coming into being through social imperatives.

The fact that visual technologies emerge out of particular social and epistemic contexts means that their possibility often precedes their development. The elements of linear perspective existed prior to its "invention" during the Renaissance. As we mentioned in Chapter 4, the ancient Greeks understood the logic of perspective, yet they rejected the technique because it contradicted prevalent philosophical ideas—a drawing using perspective would not embody truth so much as it might trick its viewer. Perspective's emergence as a dominant technique was the outcome of a particular episteme rather than the invention of a technology. Similarly, many of the chemical and mechanical formulas necessary to produce photographic images existed prior to photography's invention simultaneously by several practitioners in the late 1830s.

Early uses of photography were both institutional (for medical, legal, and scientific uses) and personal (for family mementos), and these uses influenced the

development of photographic technologies. As photo historian Geoffrey Batchen writes, the key question is not about invention but “at what moment did photography shift from an occasional, isolated, individual fantasy to a demonstrably widespread, social imperative?”⁸ In other words, photography emerged, through a series of social and technological networks, as a popular medium not simply because it was invented or because certain chemical and light processes were found to be useful or interesting. Rather, photography came about through particular nineteenth-century epistemic interests, around which a set of technologies and practices that came to be called “photography” coalesced. It became so imperative to social and political life that most of us now engage in this practice daily, trading ideas in images in the way that previous cultures traded ideas in words. That we now take photographs on a phone, previously a voice-only tool, indicates that technologies are flexible, adaptive, and interdependent. Their design, hardware, and software involve creative “making and doing.”

Photography emerged as a popular visual technology because it fit certain emerging social concepts and needs—modern ideas about the individual in the context of growing urban centers, technological progress and mechanization, time and spontaneity, and state bureaucratic institutions interested in documentation and classification. Photography helped usher in late modernity, emerging along with discourses of modernist science, the penal system, medicine, the media, and other institutions of everyday life that made visual reproducibility a modern imperative in the industrial era. Photography epitomized the new and

modern way of seeing that prevailed in a century devoted to industrial production.

Narratives of inevitability are a key aspect of technological determinism. For instance, many nineteenth-century moving-image technologies are now seen as “proto-cinematic,” that is, precinematic devices. In the decades prior to the cinema, vaudeville entertainers, magicians, and traveling performers entertained spectators with a range of techniques that historians would later regard as precursors to cinematic projection. A popular form of entertainment called the magic lantern show involved the projection of still photographic slides with narrative or descriptive accompaniment provided by a live performer. Although these were not moving images in a strict sense, the sequential arrangement of images, their projection for an assembled group, and the voice-over narration lent a kind of flow and theatrical display element that would later be a strong feature of motion pictures. Projection machines variously called Zoetropes, Praxinoscopes, and Phenakistoscopes were designed in the early nineteenth century on the model of the camera obscura, which we discussed in Chapter 4,

FIG. 5.5

Zoetrope (9¼" diameter, 13 slots)



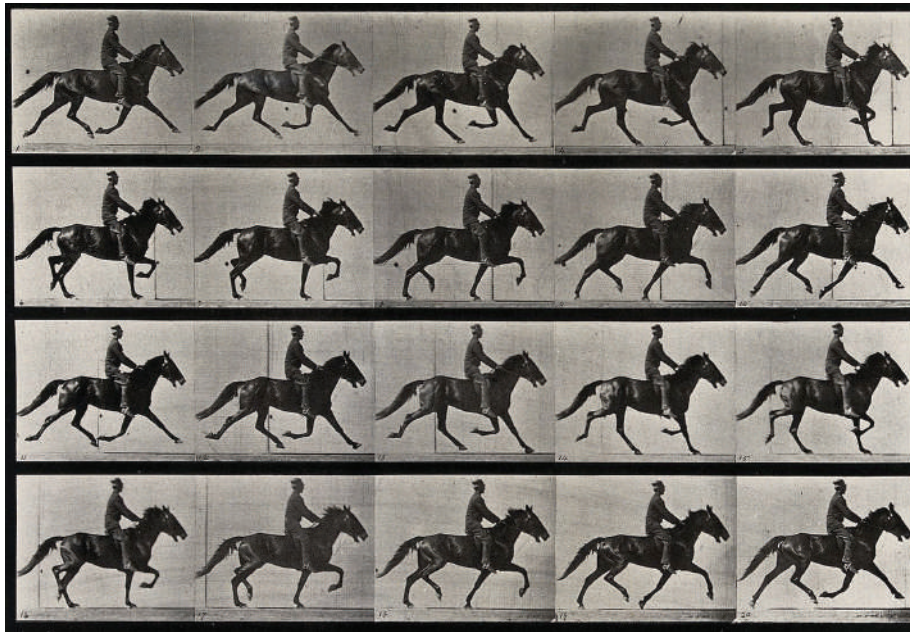


FIG. 5.6

Eadweard Muybridge, *The Horse in Motion*, 1878

but included a kind of round drum that accommodated an interior light source. Inside the drum was placed a strip of photographs taken in a sequence. When a viewer spun the inner drum, the serial images each passed a peephole in a rapid sequence, giving the illusion of a flickering moving image.

Visual technologies exploring motion were related to the work of photographer Eadweard Muybridge, who in the late nineteenth century studied animal and human locomotion. Leland Stanford, the wealthy California governor after whom Stanford University is named, asked Muybridge to use his motion studies to settle a bet: Did the hooves of a galloping horse ever leave the ground all at the same time? The unaided eye could not discern the answer because the movement was so rapid. Working with a railroad engineer, in 1878 Muybridge set up an elaborate system of twelve stereoscopic cameras, positioned at twelve-foot intervals on a track and rigged so that the horse would trigger the shutter of each camera as it passed. The sequence of images showed the exact position of the horse's hooves, and one revealed that the horse did indeed become airborne for a fleeting instant. Muybridge's project was one of many scientific and popular uses of photographic motion study in North America and Europe during this period. It is common to see the kinescopes and motion sequences as inevitably resulting in the development of cinema in the 1890s, but in fact cinema was not the only possible outcome of such fascinations with motion and mobility. Early film viewing took place not in motion pictures theaters but at nickelodeons, one-person viewing machines with turning cranks. The development of visual technologies thus involves many aspects that are unpredictable rather than determined by technological progress alone.

Photographic technology epitomized the era of modernity associated with factories, industrial technology, and machine ascendancy. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, photography was used in the arts and entertainment industries as well as in science, technology, and medicine. Photography was deployed as a form of documentation, measurement, and organization in all of these institutions that were linked through a shared ideological focus on visual reproducibility. Consider the factory production line, the backbone of nineteenth-century capitalist industrial production. It was devoted to the task of making identical products, reproductions of a given design for consumption through the growing world market. This focus on assembly-line reproduction is the subject of the classic Andy Warhol Pop art soup can icon, which we discuss in Chapter 7 (Fig. 7.5), a unique work of art that takes as its subject matter a label replicated a million times over and present in the pantry of every mid-century American home.

Visual reproducibility was a modern imperative, and the mass-produced photographic camera captured that spirit. Photography epitomized the new and modern way of seeing through the form of the print as copy. In the nineteenth century, the camera and film manufacturer Kodak heavily shaped social photography practices. When in 1900 Kodak introduced the \$1 Brownie, shipping more than 150,000 in its first year on the world market, the public embraced the easy-to-use camera across generations, classes, and nations. In *Forensic*

Media, Greg Siegel recounts a popular magazine account of the Brownie as a toy that provides a colonial fantasy of global omniscience: “Like the magic carpet of the Arabian Nights tales, [the Brownie] whisks you anywhere and everywhere. . . . But because of it any small schoolboy knows more today about what this earth is like than the wisest of the Greek philosophers.”⁹

Kodak’s technologies provided a radical new sense of the abundance of images. In the late 1880s, Kodak began manufacturing film rolls with 100 exposures, which, as historian Nancy West writes, “was probably over ten times as many photographs as the average middle-class American family owned at the time.”¹⁰ This simple technological development, writes West, transformed amateur photography by tapping into the “dominant hope of American culture since the early nineteenth century: effortless abundance.”¹¹ Today’s proliferation of picture taking and instant picture sharing via Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook has resulted in an unprecedented abundance of images. The idea of the snapshot and the practice of casually documenting one’s everyday life through photographs were introduced as global and world-expanding activities more than 100 years ago with the Brownie.



FIG. 5.7

Eastman Kodak ad for Brownie box camera, 1903

The Reproduced Image and the Copy

The practice of making copies has a long history. The word *copy* dates back to the Medieval Latin words *copiare*, to transcribe, and *copia*, to write an original many times. Shortly before the Egyptian New Kingdom period, the funerary scrolls previously rendered only for dead pharaohs and court members were copied and placed in the coffins of everyday people. Art historians H. W. Janson and Anthony Janson proposed in their canonical history of Western art that this practice democratized the afterlife.¹² Whether or not this claim is accurate, it is true that the manufacture of scrolls for many people required reproduction. The scrolls were rendered in ink on papyrus (a thick paper-like sheaf made from the papyrus plant) and formed into a continuous roll. They were adapted and revised over hundreds of years BCE by Egyptian artisans who made copies by hand in special funerary workshops. Segments by different artists were pasted together to make complete scrolls, much like a contemporary graphic novel to which different artists contribute parts. The name of the dead was left blank in each copy, to be filled in later.

This scene from a papyrus scroll (c. 1275 BCE) shows the scribe Hunefer's heart being weighed on Maat's scale against the feather of truth by the jackal-headed Anubis while the scribe Thoth writes down the results. If his heart equals exactly the weight of the feather, Hunefer is allowed to pass into the afterlife. If not, he is eaten by a waiting creature. These scrolls compose a narrative in pictures and hieroglyph script.

As we discuss further in the next section, the original has held its own as a valued form. The work of art has been widely regarded throughout history as a unique and original object, with its meaning and value tied to the importance of the place in which it resides (a church, palace, or museum, for example). But even during the period before modernity and the age of mechanical production, paintings and sculptures entailed reproduction. In the Renaissance, religious art was sometimes reproduced in the form of replicas (hand-hewn or hand-painted copies). A bronze sculpture requires casting from a mold taken from hand-formed clay.

FIG. 5.8

Last Judgement of Hunefer, page from Book of the Dead papyrus from the tomb of the Egyptian scribe Hunefer, c. 1275 BCE



Thus; the “original” (the bronze cast) may be a multiple, and could be thought of as a copy of the ephemeral clay “original.”

Monetary value is a key factor in determining the status of reproductions and copies. When works are produced in series, reproducibility is often understood within a system of limited or diminishing value. Even with woodblock printing (which was used in Chinese antiquity) or sculpture casting from a mold (a practice dating back to ancient Egypt), the value of each work in a series is often determined by its status among a limited number of “originals.” Typically, the lower its number in a series, the more rare, and hence valuable, is the copy. The first print in a series of silkscreens is more valuable than the tenth or twentieth. Yet the hand of the artist still counts: a photograph printed by the photographer is more valuable than a print made by another person from the photographer’s negative.

Technologies of imaging designed explicitly to produce multiples include photography and printmaking techniques such as engraving, etching, woodcuts (popularized in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries), and lithography (popularized in the early nineteenth century). Art historian William Ivins proposes that although great emphasis has always been placed on the printing press’s invention in the mid-fifteenth century by Johannes Gutenberg (of a technology that reproduced type), earlier techniques for printing pictures and diagrams were tremendously important to the modern emergence of the copy. Without prints, Ivins states, “we should have very few of our modern sciences, technologies, archaeologies, or ethnologies—

for all of these are dependent, first or last, upon information conveyed by exactly repeatable visual or pictorial statements.”¹³

The photographic image presents a very particular set of issues in the relationship of reproduction, art value, and mechanical production. The camera obscura had been in use for centuries as a seeing and drawing device, but it was not until the 1820s that the French inventor Joseph Nicéphore Niépce would modify its design to expose permanent images. With Louis Daguerre, Niépce later devised a means to create a silver compound that, when exposed to light in a camera obscura box, would leave behind an image impression. Exposure initially took eight hours. These “daguerreotypes” were eventually used for portraiture and to capture scenes such as the newly industrial city. Unlike photographs made from negatives,



FIG. 5.9

Louis Daguerre, *View of the Boulevard du Temple*, 3rd arrondissement, Paris, 1838, believed to be the earliest surviving photograph to show a living person

from which multiple copies can be made, the daguerreotype is a unique object, a direct exposure and not a print.

The acceptance of photography in the fine art market, in which the concept of the original reigns even now, was not easy. This was in part because of the form's association with copies, and in part because of the process's mechanical aspects in a market fetishizing the artist's hand. As we noted, photography was not the first technique to introduce reproducibility to the art market. The problem of valuing the photograph as "original art" is captured in the concept of the "original print." With photographic prints made from a glass plate or negative roll film, the original photograph resides in copies struck from a negative or plate which, paradoxically, is the unique, individual form from which "original prints" are made.

The association of art-making with machines has had a complex history, as we noted in Chapter 4, where we saw that the use of the camera obscura and the optical lens to trace a scene has been much debated. Classical artworks that are too closely associated with technical instruments have run the risk of being devalued and reduced to commercial work. Value continues to be tied to the direct work of the artist's hand and eye, despite centuries of experimentation and production with tools, instruments, and machines. By contrast, photography embodied the rationalism and empiricism of the modern era, when visibility was equated with science, technology, and knowledge.

Since the 1960s, theorists such as Roland Barthes and André Bazin have regarded the photograph as sharing a unique affinity with the real. Barthes, in his classic book *Camera Lucida*, reminds us that the analog photograph, unlike the drawing or painting, has the unique quality of conveying a guarantee that something "has been." This is because the film camera needs to share the same space, time, and light with the object it photographs. This emphasis on the empirical co-existence of the camera and the scene is related to what semiotician Charles Pierce calls the image's indexical quality, its ability to serve as empirical evidence of the real. The co-existence of the camera with its object was a persuasive argument for the use of photographs, films, and videotapes as criminal evidence. In this sense, the photograph is an empirical object in both an epistemological sense (it provides knowledge of what has been) and an ontological sense (it guarantees that something has been). While reproduction techniques including lithography and printmaking existed in the modern era before photography, the photograph was a game changer in concepts of the copy and the reproducible image.

Walter Benjamin and Mechanical Reproduction

These issues were of particular interest to Walter Benjamin, a twentieth-century German critic whose work remains remarkably influential today. In his 1936 essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin proposed that in photography and motion picture film, there is no truly unique image. Rather, there

are copies (prints), each of which stands equally in the place of the singular original. Benjamin criticized the prior emphasis on the original for reifying the artwork as commodity in a capitalist system. With reproducibility an integral feature of the medium, the capitalist system of the valued singular object could be challenged. Reproducibility was a potentially revolutionary quality of art practice because it freed art from its market status as revered unique artifact. Art, newly understood as existing in reproducible and broadly circulating forms, could be a democratizing force and could now be used for a more fluid socialist politics that included reception by the masses. Reproduction no longer lessened the value of replicas or faked copies. Inherently reproducible forms could become much more pervasively recognized and valued in their own right, transforming art-making and art-marketing practices dramatically.

Reproducibility moved the artwork away from the centuries-long emphasis on uniqueness and authenticity, and yet the concept of the aura still held strong. Benjamin wrote that “even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.”¹⁴ It is precisely this “presence in time and space” that Benjamin refers to as giving the original an *aura*, which he ties to its authenticity. Traditionally, authenticity refers to that which is true and real. The term also refers to an enduring, timeless quality, such as “authentically” classical beauty, a quality we discuss in Chapter 3 in a discussion about a Keri lotion advertisement and the Ingres painting it references. In Benjamin’s terms, the original artwork’s authenticity cannot be reproduced.

The idea of the valuable, original artwork remains a foundation of the art market, affirming Benjamin’s concept of the aura. Despite the fact that replicas and multiple copies of paintings have existed throughout art history, the valuing of the unique

artwork is key to art’s financialization. Continuing concerns about forgeries and fakes in museums and private collections highlight the material value of the original in an era dominated by copies. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, connoisseurs were responsible for authenticating artworks, as they were trusted to know the real thing when they saw it. Some authenticators licked, smelled, and touched the painting for evidence of material likeness to other works by the same painter. Sleuthing involved noting depicted elements that are from the era (the wrong style of clothing, for example, would indicate a possible fake). By the middle of the twentieth century, forgery detection entered the domain of laboratory science, with chemical analysis of paint and paper introduced to determine the use of materials from later time periods, and X-ray imaging, CT scanning, and infrared examination used to determine underlying paint layers and structural changes or repairs. Spectrophotometry is a laboratory process used to date pigment by analyzing its chemical composition. Authentication practices thus moved from personalized skill



FIG. 5.10

Authentication of a painting: scientists conducting analysis with particle accelerator of *The Ritratto Trivulzio* (1476) by Antonello da Messina at LABEC, Italian Institute of Nuclear Physics Laboratory for Cultural Heritage and Environment, Florence, Italy

and empirical assessment (through smell and taste) to scientific data produced by machines. In recent years, several high-profile forgery cases have highlighted the possibility that many so-called authenticated works are fakes. In 2011, the respected New York Knoedler Gallery closed after 165 years of business when it was revealed that it had sold at least thirty-two modern art forgeries. They were produced by a Chinese immigrant working in Queens and sold to the gallery by a dealer.¹⁵ As the global art market continues to value unique modern artworks as forms of economic investment and cultural capital, the forgery market continues to coexist with it.

Benjamin noted that an original artwork's meaning changes when it is reproduced, because its subsequent value comes not from its uniqueness but rather from its status as being the original from which copies derive. Reproduction thus plays an essential role in the dissemination of knowledge about an original work and the maintenance of its value. It is commonplace today for famous paintings to be reproduced in art books and on websites, posters, postcards, coffee mugs, and T-shirts.

Exposure to original artworks remains a relatively rarefied experience, an option for those with the means and the incentive to travel to the museums and collections in which highly valued originals are displayed. Reproducibility thus means that viewers may come to know, love, and even own a copy of a valued work without ever having seen the original in which meaning and value are still understood to reside. The reproduction, paradoxically, becomes the form through which meaning and value are maintained in original works.

Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* (known in Italian as "La Gioconda"), a portrait believed to have been painted between 1503 and 1506, is one of the most famous, and most visited, paintings in the world. It is known to most people through its many reproductions in art books and on postcards, calendars, refrigerator magnets, and other trinkets. As we noted in Chapter 1, the original painting is on display at the Louvre, behind bulletproof security glass. Over 3 million people flock to see it each year, standing before it fifteen seconds each on average. Even those who have never seen the original have seen its reproductions. Christie's auction house, discussing Andy Warhol's reproduction of the icon in his *Colored Mona Lisa* (1963), has called the painting the "ultimate Pop icon."¹⁶ The painting has been subject to countless parodies and remakes. For instance, in 1919 Marcel Duchamp took a

FIG. 5.11

Marcel Duchamp, *L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1930 (readymade, pencil on found postcard)



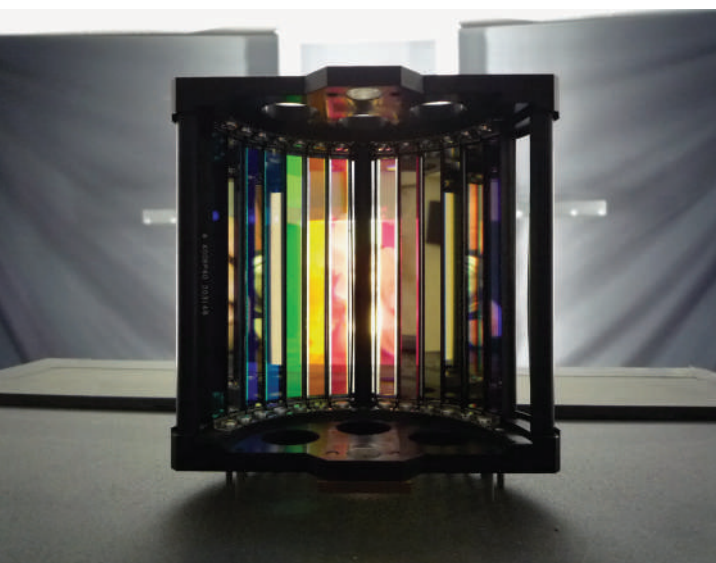


FIG. 5.12

The *Mona Lisa* viewed through the 13 filters of Pascal Cotte's multispectral scanner, used to generate data about the original pigments used without touching the painting

cheap postcard version of the painting and drew a moustache and goatee on the famous portrait. This was one of numerous “ready-mades” that Duchamp produced, deploying a satirical irreverence that was characteristic of Dada art. He named the work *L.H.O.O.Q.*, which when spoken quickly in French sounds like “elle a chaud au cul,” vulgar slang for “she has a hot ass.” As we noted in Chapter 1, the smile can

have many different meanings, and historically the *Mona Lisa*'s smile has been seen as enigmatic. Duchamp recoded that smile as sexual and made lewd insinuations about the model, stripping away the reverence surrounding this icon. Later, the French Surrealist painter Salvador Dalí paid homage to Duchamp's prank by also remaking the *Mona Lisa*, giving her his own famous moustache. Two years after Warhol made his *Colored Mona Lisa* screen print, a *Mona Lisa* reproduction was one of the first images to be scanned and digitally reproduced on a computer in 1965, along with a portrait of computer scientist Norbert Wiener, who famously introduced cybernetics in his 1948 book *Cybernetics, or, Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*.

The *Mona Lisa* remains fascinating, and science has been marshaled to tell its story. It has been subject to intensive forensic examination, for example, by the French scientist Pascal Cotte, whose examination of the work through a multispectral imaging camera revealed forms painted on the poplar board underneath the layer that contains the famous portrait. Cotte was portrayed by the media as using science to get the *Mona Lisa* to “reveal her secrets,” a trope sometimes used to describe scientists' revelations about the human body and nature.¹⁷ The media attention to Cotte's study suggests that although contemporary society is saturated with reproduced and mass-produced images, reverence for the original continues to hold strong. Visual technology becomes a means of confirming the truth of the original or of uncovering its previously hidden truths. The currency of scientific imaging in the twentieth-first century is contingent on the ability of such techniques to provide authentication and further information, shoring up the value of the unique work through techniques that analyze it as a physical object. Value thus rests not solely in the work's uniqueness but also in its aesthetic, cultural, and social worth as a material and historical artifact. In the case of the *Mona Lisa*, this fascination with evidence of the real has extended to a fascination with the body of the model. In 2015, the international news reported with great excitement that bones suspected to be the skeleton of Lisa Gherardini,

believed by some historians to have been the model for the *Mona Lisa*, had been unearthed from beneath a convent in Florence. Plans for DNA testing and a comparison of the skull with the head in the portrait were jettisoned when it was realized that the remaining skull fragments had deteriorated.

As these examples make clear, images are still valued as original works with unique auras, even as their multiplicity undercuts that status. Digital images have no original—digital copies are of relatively equal quality and value. However, Benjamin's points remain valid today: the reproduction of a singular image (such as a painting) can affect the meaning and value of that original, and the reproducibility of an image changes its relationship to rituals of display and the work's social uses and value on the market.

The Politics of Reproducibility

Benjamin argued that mechanical reproduction introduced a profound change in art's political function. He stated, "instead of being based on ritual, [art] begins to be based on another practice—politics."¹⁸ Benjamin wrote this essay in 1930s Germany, as the rise of Fascism and the Nazi Party was orchestrated in part by an elaborate image propaganda machine. Germany's Third Reich anticipated much of the contemporary political use of images to shape political leaders' reputations. Its images of monumentality and massive regimentation are now icons for both a Fascist aesthetic and the practice of propaganda.

Mechanically, electronically, or digitally reproduced images can be in many places simultaneously and can be combined with text or other images or reworked. These capabilities have greatly increased images' capacity to captivate and persuade. In the 1930s, German artist John Heartfield produced anti-Nazi photo collages critiquing the use of Adolf Hitler's image to further Nazi political power. These works had a biting political edge. The powerful effect of Heartfield's images is derived in part from his use of "found" photographic images to make political statements. In *Adolf as Superman*, he portrays Hitler swallowing gold coins and taking the money of the German people. Heartfield borrowed from the style of German propaganda images to make his political art, turning Nazi images against themselves. The photo-collage form allowed Heartfield to make a political statement through reworking and combining familiar images in new ways, giving the image a kind of visceral quality.

The reproduction of a charged image can also heighten its original political message. One image that has served as a revolutionary political icon is the 1961 photograph of Latin American revolutionary figure Che Guevara taken by the Cuban photographer Korda (Alberto Díaz Gutiérrez). The photograph

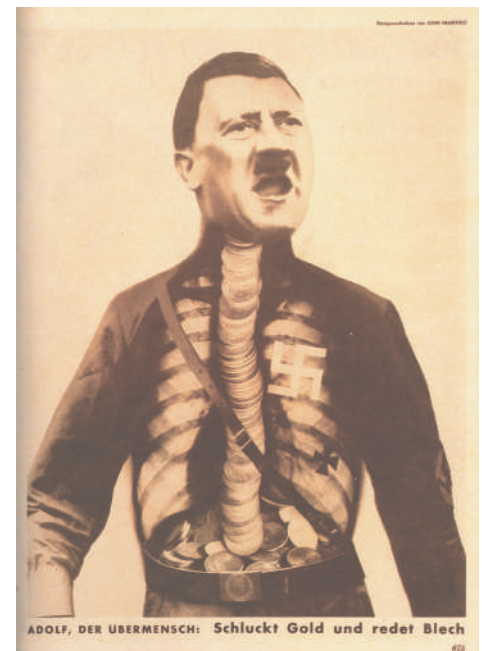


FIG. 5.13

John Heartfield, *Adolf as Superman: "He Swallows Gold and Spits Out Tin-Plate,"* 1932 (gelatin silver print)



FIG. 5.14

Alfredo Rostgaard (OSPAAAL),
Portrait of Che, 1969 (offset print,
66 × 39.5 cm)

of Che looking outward and wearing a beret with a star on it has long been an important symbol in Cuba, where Guevara is a hero for his participation in the 1959 Cuban Revolution. As Ariana Hernández-Reguant explains, Che's image can be tracked to read the broader cultural and political transformation of art and authorship under late socialism in Cuba, from censorship to Cuba's gradual move to a market economy.¹⁹ As we explain later, the politics of image ownership and copyright brought new meaning and marketability to a photograph—and to its photographer—that had already taken on a diverse range of forms and meanings for an international public.

The reproduction of Che's photograph has been a crucial aspect of the way in which Guevara became not only a hero of leftist Latin American politics (and a global icon of revolutionary socialist politics) but also a revolutionary martyr. In the original photograph Che is wearing a beret. Although the beret was traditional military gear, it has since the mid-twentieth century had an association with revolutionary politics. For instance, in the 1960s, the Black Panthers, who were very conscious of the role of images in revolutionary politics, wore black berets as a uniform that connected back to Che's style. The single star on Che's beret, which designates his military rank of comandante as a guerrilla in the fight over revolutionary Cuba, is mythologized both as a designation of Che's unique valor and as a symbol of his star power.²⁰ At this point in history, images employing even just the abstract silhouette of Che are widely recognizable as copies of the iconic image.

The famous photograph of Che has been reproduced in many forms. Throughout the world, the Che image has circulated not only as an icon of revolutionary politics but also as a generic countercultural icon. We find the Che image reproduced on tote bags (with the slogan "Chénge the World") and mouse pads. The original specific political associations of the Che image are diminished in these reproductions. Ironically, Che's face has become ubiquitous on those very consumer objects that Che himself might have critiqued for their role in commodity fetishism.

This reproduction of images also raises issues of copyright and ownership. In socialist Cuba, Korda's right to own Che's image was limited. The image was used for many decades without copyright being invoked. In 2000, however, Korda



FIG. 5.15

Che "Revolutionary Martyr"
mousepad

Alberto "Korda" Diaz, photographer of Che photo, after winning lawsuit against agency Lowe Lintas and photo agency Rex Features, September 8, 2000, in Havana, Cuba



successfully sued the British ad agency Lowe Lintas, which had used the image in a Smirnoff vodka ad. Hernández-Reguant writes that the lawsuit indicated both Cuba's entrance into the global economy and the emergence of a group of elite cultural producers who are able to exercise claims over the value of their work in foreign markets.²¹ Needless to say, there are multiple ironies in the competing values placed on the reproductions of Che's image (moral values of the revolution, national values of the Cuban state, and commercial values of the global marketplace) in a global economy.

The tradition of political art and images of protest, which expanded in significant ways in the mechanical reproduction era, often stands in opposition to the idea that images should be unique, sacred, valuable, and copyrighted or owned by an individual. For instance, AIDS activists produced images for the purpose of distributing as many symbols and messages as possible on the street through posters, buttons, stickers, and T-shirts. These images were disseminated in the 1980s and 1990s in cities around the world as a means of using the street as a forum for protest art.

The *Silence = Death* image (which has an inverted pink triangle in its center) was distributed in many forms and even spray-painted onto sidewalks in cities such as New York beginning in 1987, when six gay activists launched the Silence = Death Project. This image's value does not come from its reference to any original but is derived from its proliferation on the streets as a political message. It was intended to make people recognize and reconsider their passivity through its omnipresence alongside advertisements and street signage in urban public space. The triangle refers to the pink triangle that homosexuals were forced to wear in Nazi Germany, just as Jews were forced to wear the yellow Star of David. It raised awareness about the deaths resulting from political and public health inattention to the AIDS crisis in its early years. The triangle was adapted from a pro-gay symbol created in the 1970s, which recoded the homophobic Nazi symbol by flipping it and reversing its meaning from humiliation to solidarity and resistance. Appropriating and transcoding



FIG. 5.17

Silence = Death, 1986, by Silence = Death Project, designed by Avram Finkelstein (poster, offset lithography, 29 × 24")

the original symbol has important political implications. The original symbol is emptied of its former destructive power and given new strength. The *Silence = Death* image's effectiveness is directly related to its capacity to be reproduced many times and to exist in many different places at the same time, where it may be grasped in its historical references or interpreted only in its contemporary meaning. The more the icon proliferates, the more powerful its message. Importantly, the symbol is not copyrighted. It may be copied and circulated freely.

We see in the *Silence = Death* poster the way in which text may dramatically change the meaning of a graphic symbol or photographic image. Words direct our look; they can tell us how and what to see in a picture or graphic. The text that accompanies the Heartfield photo collage in Figure 5.13, "He swallows gold and spits out tin-plate," explains the image to us and makes clear its political meaning. It strongly condemns Hitler as a leader who is robbing the German people and spitting out lies. The words "Silence = Death" give a new meaning to the transformed pink triangle, encoding it with the message that silence about HIV is fatal.

Ownership and Copyright

Benjamin could never have anticipated the legal debates about image reproduction ownership rights that accompanied the rise of reproduction techniques and politics in the digital era. Computers and digital imaging have made the possibilities for reproduction and ownership of images seemingly limitless. This situation raises issues about the status of ownership and rights in relation to reproduction.

Images are, legally speaking, forms of intellectual property. Moral codes and laws concerning copyright in particular not only regulate the flow of copies but also shape ideas about what constitutes a legitimate use of a copy and what constitutes an infraction of ownership rights. When is the right to an image protected by law? With the proliferation of means of reproduction in the twentieth century, ownership of the image emerged as a complex field of ethics and law, raising issues of privacy, image rights, and intellectual property (copyright and trademark).

Copyright, taken literally, means "the right to copy." The term refers to not one but a bundle of rights. This bundle includes the rights to distribute, produce, copy, display, perform, create, and control derivative works based on the original. Although the concept would seem to facilitate copying by delineating rights to do so, it was in fact established to protect the rights of an image's owner or producer from others wishing to make copies, if only for a limited period of time. In the United States, this time limit has continually been expanded so that in 2017 it stands, for works created in or after 1978, at the author's life plus 70 years, or 95 years, or 120 years (depending on the nature of authorship) if a corporation is the work's owner. The reasons for this copyright extension has little to do with legal reasoning and a lot to do with the aims of corporations like Disney to maintain ownership over their creations. Disney lobbied hard to maintain copyright of

Mickey Mouse, who, under the 1998 Copyright Term Extension Act (facetiously called the Mickey Mouse Forever Act), remains under copyright until 2023.

Copyright grants legal protection to the “expression of an idea,” and not to the work as object or the idea in itself. The fixed expression is deemed to belong uniquely to someone—the photographer, writer, or painter—who created it and is not transferred when a work is sold. Let us first consider the case of a painting. A painting is owned by its creator unless painted under contract as “work for hire.” But we have to ask: In what does the “the painting” consist? Is it the object? Not exactly. When the painting is sold, ownership of the object itself is transferred, but the right to reproduce that object is not. The painter sells the object but not the “expression of the idea” that it contains. The rights to the expression of the idea, as well as rights to reproduce, distribute, and make derivative works from the painting, all remain with the artist (unless there is a separate contract conveying those rights). Within the terms of copyright law, reproductions of the painting are considered reproductions of the *expression of the idea* (which the painter owns) and not simply reproductions of the *physical object*, the painting. In other words, authenticity, in legal terms, resides in the painting as a unique expression of the painter’s idea and not in the literal uniqueness of the object (“the painting”) that is bought and owned.

Ownership can extend to a copy of one’s image or likeness. To whom does one’s image or appearance belong, and how is ownership of a likeness determined? John David Viera, writing about privacy in documentary photography, raises this question first as an ethical issue. He discusses, among other cases, the portraits taken by photographers employed by the Farm Security Administration during the 1930s of poor migrant farmers caught in the economic and environmental devastation of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl that wiped out farmland in the American Midwest.²² Consider Dorothea Lange’s photograph *Migrant Mother*, which was discussed in Chapter 1 (Fig. 1.32). The face of this woman, Florence Owens Thompson, has become a widely recognized icon of the Depression. Viera notes that individuals like her were saddled with a seemingly eternal role as a public icon, yet they received little or no personal benefit, economic or otherwise, from this lifelong task. The issue of obtaining consent from a photographic subject, he explains, buries the deeper problem of the subject’s lack of ability to predict and control the meanings and uses of their image as it may be reproduced and circulated in different contexts for decades and perhaps even centuries to come.

The likenesses of public personalities pose different issues with regard to privacy and exploitation. Celebrities, Viera explains, have public images that may generate economic benefit for them, and they are practiced in the techniques of controlling and benefiting from the circulation of their likenesses.

The copyright of celebrity public images is a good place for us to unpack the complex “bundle of rights” we mentioned previously. Consider the example of fan products bearing the likeness, name, and lyrics of Taylor Swift, the American pop musician who in 2015 went after Etsy vendors who reproduced her image and lyrics in



FIG. 5.18

Taylor Swift prayer candle for sale on Etsy in 2015

some of their DIY craft items. Swift owns rights to her name and image through registration filings made on her behalf with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. These rights are typically enforced through civil law, beginning with a request from a lawyer hired by the trademark holder (Swift) to the alleged trademark violator (the DIY maker) to take down the image or likeness and desist in sales of products reproducing them. In major cases of counterfeit and piracy, criminal law may be brought into play. In the case of Swift, the artist alone holds rights to her image through both common law trademark rights and right of publicity. Swift has taken the right of ownership quite far by registering, for example, phrases that appear on her album *1989*. She even filed for copyright of “party like it’s 1989,” a phrase derivative of lyrics also found in “1999,” the popular Prince song released in 1982 (the phrase there is “party like its 1999”). Some fans expressed incredulity on social media sites that Swift could copyright something she appropriated.

In the case of photographic images, there is yet another level of authorship to be negotiated. To market fan products involving a photographic image (say, a T-shirt), one would have to acquire permission not only from the star but also from the photographer who took the picture or the media outlet (depending on who holds the copyright to the photograph). The photographer’s copyright does not include the ability to exploit the person depicted by using the image as a marketing tool or by selling the image. To make a fan product depicting Taylor Swift, the maker of the object would need to not only purchase a copy of the photograph but also negotiate and pay for the right to reproduce the photograph and, further, the right to reproduce it on a particular type of item and number of copies to be sold in designated markets for a finite time. This is in addition to

needing permission separately from Taylor Swift, both as a musical artist and as an individual, for the rights to reproduce her image on these sale items.

Copyright debates have largely focused on the ways that copyright law can stifle artistic creativity. In many ways, art has always been about copying, borrowing, and appropriating, whether we are talking about the visual arts or music. In the United States, the Fair Use Doctrine (made law in the Copyright Act of 1976) permits copying without permission of the copyright holder in certain limited cases, such as educational purpose, commentary, criticism, or parody. Fair use is usually the legal basis on which art copyright cases have been argued. A factor in determining fair use is the question of whether the copy promotes or adds something new—whether it is transformative rather than simply derivative of the original. A major question is how the courts determine the difference between transformation and derivation of a work in an era when appropriation and parody are common artistic forms.

FIG. 5.19

Art Rogers, *Puppies*, 1980 (photograph on postcard)



What constitutes transformation in legal terms? The 1992 court case of *Rogers v. Koons* demonstrated this question. The professional photographer Art Rogers produced this image, titled *Puppies*, which was reproduced on postcards and other goods. The American artist Jeff Koons, known for appropriation and oversized kitsch sculptures, sent a copy of a postcard with this image, copyright label removed, to an Italian studio with instructions for its assembly in the form of a statue. The sculpture, which he titled *String of Puppies*, originally sold for a reported \$367,000 (it is now worth millions). When Rogers sued Koons and his gallery for copyright infringement, Koons claimed his work was a parody and therefore was protected under the Fair Use Doctrine. The court determined that Koons's sculpture might be a parody on a general style but that it copies the specific Rogers image. It was not the Rogers artwork that was being parodied, the court explained, but rather a broader style. *String of Puppies* therefore did not constitute fair use. It was derivative, not transformative. An interesting aspect of this determination is that the sculpture was considered derivative despite its obvious transformation of media (from photography to sculpture) and color (the postcard was black and white, the sculpture is blue and orange).

Later, in 2006, the courts ruled in favor of Koons in another of his legal cases (*Blanch v. Koons*). For a work he titled *Niagara*, the artist appropriated a photograph by professional fashion and portrait photographer Andrea Blanch that had been published in *Allure* magazine. Koons argued that the work, a painting commissioned by Deutsche Bank and the Guggenheim Museum, used popular images to comment on the social and aesthetic consequences of the mass media. The court ruled that use of the legs from Blanch's copyrighted image constituted fair use because Koons's painting had an entirely different purpose and meaning from the original work and took a different form in a different social context (a gallery).

The question of transformation was also at issue in the copyright case of *Shepard Fairey v. Associated Press*, in which Fairey was accused of copying without permission or attribution the photograph of Associated Press



FIG. 5.20

Jeff Koons, *String of Puppies*, 1998, on iPad



(a)



(b)

FIG. 5.21

(a) Mannie Garcia, Barack Obama, 2008; (b) Shepard Fairey, "Hope" Poster, 2008

photographer Mannie Garcia for his Obama Hope poster.²³ Fairey had downloaded the image from the web. His lawyers argued that his style of colorizing, texturing,

and reshaping the image transformed the work. Fairey's work can be situated within the longer history of art that appropriates, and this legal case (which was eventually settled out of court) is one of many examples where the use of copyright law to challenge art could be seen as potentially stifling creativity. Law professor Amy Adler writes that the fair use argument is ultimately destructive in the context of art styles that copy, borrow, and appropriate all the time. The transformative inquiry, she writes, poses precisely the wrong questions about contemporary art. "It requires the courts to search for 'meaning' and 'message' when the goal of current art is to throw the idea of stable meaning into play."²⁴ Art that aims to destabilize meaning, to provide new ways of seeing, cannot then be seen under the criteria of the transformative test to be creating new meaning. Much contemporary art rejects the concept of newness, Adler argues, "using copying as the primary building block of creativity."²⁵

Historically, artists have often engaged with the question of the copy and copyright by playing with legal codes in ways that align with Adler's argument. In the 1980s, artist Sherrie Levine reproduced original works by famous artists without apparent alteration, as in this reproduction of the famous 1925 Edward Weston photograph of the torso of his son as a young boy.

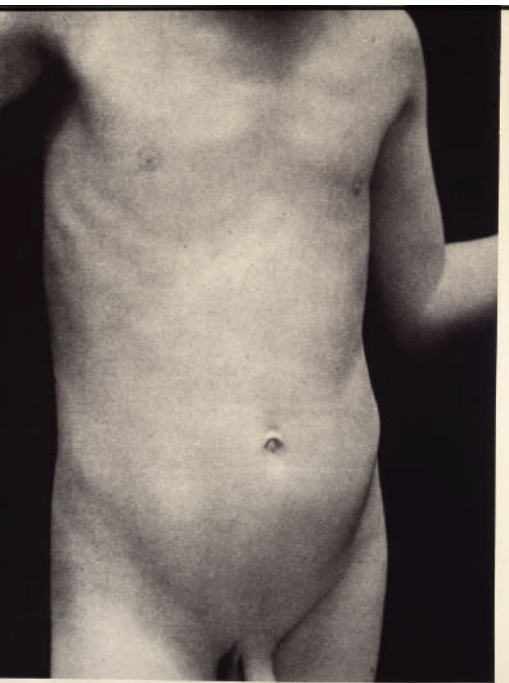


FIG. 5.22

Sherrie Levine, *Untitled (After Edward Weston, ca. 1925)*, 1981 (type C color print)

After the turn of the twentieth century, photographers like Weston (in a movement dubbed the Photo-Secession) aimed to break away from documentary and commercial uses for photography and introduce a pictorialist, painterly style. In *Neil, Nude*, one of Weston's nude photographic studies featuring his young son in poses and compositions reminiscent of Donatello's Renaissance-era *David* (1446–60), the torso is framed to accentuate the lights and darks of form captured in the fine-grained detail of the palladium print, a process involving a highly durable metal emulsion. Levine copied the photograph, displaying it with no additional alteration. By rephotographing Weston's work, Levine highlighted the act of replication of classical value and taste standards. By explicitly displaying a photographic copy of a photograph as a new "original" work, Levine raised questions about the status of appropriation in 1980s fine art and the nature of creativity in the age of mechanical reproducibility at a postmodern moment on the cusp of the digital turn.

Levine's questions about art and reproducibility were further examined by the artist Amy Adler (unrelated to the law professor cited above) a decade after Levine's project. To make her work *After Sherrie Levine* (1994), Adler first copied Levine's rephotograph of *After Weston* in the form of a charcoal drawing. Then she photographed the drawing before destroying it, displaying instead a silver gelatin photographic print from this film documentation. Note that this work is captioned not just as a photograph (which might be digital and might be multiple) but as a "unique gelatin silver print."

Adler's process, which includes decisions about photographic printing options and titling, reminds us that the problem of the copy and its value as an original artwork does not originate with photography and is specific to neither the digital turn nor the entry of photography into the art market. Rather, the problem also applies to the sketch, a form of copying that is relatively transhistorical, predating photography by centuries, but which has never been granted equivalent market or art historical value with, say, the oil painting or other works for which the sketch has traditionally served as a planning tool. The sketch is more typically thrown or filed away and only rarely exhibited, usually as mere ephemera of the artist's work process.

Levine's series was also copied by the artist Michael Mandiberg. His work appeared in digital form on two identical websites, *AfterWalkerEvans.com* and *AfterSherrieLevine.com*. Whereas Levine's 1981 exhibition catalog of the series as displayed at New York's Metro Pictures gallery was copyrighted, Mandiberg's digital sites invite browsers to download any image, providing them with certificates of authenticity and ownership. The stated aim of Mandiberg's duplicate copycat sites is to create the possibility for ownership of a physical object with cultural but not economic value. Mandiberg thus quite shrewdly one-ups Sherrie Levine on the issue of reproduction. He uses digital



FIG. 5.23

Amy Adler, *After Sherrie Levine*, 1994 (unique silver gelatin print of nonextant drawing)



FIG. 5.24

Richard Prince, *New Portraits*, 2015, on display at Gagosian Gallery (enlarged prints of posts to Prince's Instagram feed)

reproduction to restore the Evans photographs, works in the public domain by a famous photographer, to their “original” status as existing in the public domain, as photographic icons of American collective memory and history. It is ironic that Levine’s own act of copying has prompted works that copy it in turn, each building on and playing with the meaning of the copy and the original.

Another artist who consistently deploys the copy and has been subject to several lawsuits is Richard Prince, who became famous (and highly influential) for a 1980s series, *Cowboys*, in which he rephotographed Marl-

boro ads and presented them, without further alteration, as works of art. In 2009 Prince was sued by photographer Patrick Cariou (*Cariou v. Prince*) for his use of Cariou’s photographs without attribution or payment. The ruling supported fair use on appeal

and the parties settled, but before this outcome, the court initially ruled that the Prince works should be destroyed, a decision that, according to law professor Amy Adler, sent fear throughout the art community. Prince’s entire body of work, she notes, has always been about questioning authorship and “disrupting our search for stability in meaning.”²⁶ More recently, Prince’s copying and appropriation has moved into the realm of social media and the “consumer as producer” model that is often at play in venues such as Instagram. In a series titled *New Portraits* exhibited in 2015 at the Gagosian Gallery in New York, Prince displayed prints that included screenshots of photographs posted by others on Instagram followed by comments, including a post by Prince himself at the end of each chain.²⁷ The price tags for the images reached \$100,000. In this series, Prince plays with the copy, as well as the context of social media, while also capitalizing on the art world’s continued willingness to place high value on the material artifact of an artist’s creative production.

These diverse cases of copyright, right of publicity, and Fair Use Doctrine claims suggest that reproduction has become an important issue not only because copies and their technologies are increasingly pervasive but also because the proliferation of copies and technologies for making them have made the stakes of owning rights to the original expression of the idea that much higher. In the United States, fair use is always determined by Fair Use Doctrine case law. Yet the proliferation of lawsuits over art and copying in recent decades demonstrates that the law and art practice are sometimes at odds. The question remains: What counts as “original” in an era of technological reproducibility and simulation? There is no easy or general answer to this question, as digital technologies have made it harder to identity what is “the original” and what are the intangibles in the bundle of rights (such as the right to

make derivative copies, the right to publish and distribute) that contribute to the “expression of the idea” that copyright is meant to protect.

Although we have been discussing Western discourse of copies and intellectual property, these concepts have very different meanings and histories in other contexts. China, for instance, has a long history of valuing the copy and the replica, and the practice of Chinese pictograph writing often focuses on the craft of repeating a brushstroke as closely as possible. China is the site of a vast copy industry for the production of such items as electronics and high-end brand knockoffs, which proliferate around the world. In the city of Shenzhen, an industry specializes in copying the designs of brand mobile phones and electronics. In some instances prototypes have been copied and reproduced before the original brand models were actually released. The industry has often been described as a practice of a developing nation that will eventually “modernize” enough to see the value of intellectual property law. But Chinese studies scholars state that the situation is much more complex. China has many copying contests, and the cultural codes that define copying practices (and the value of replicas in the market) bear no relation to the value systems we see in North American and European art markets. The Chinese market of fine art copies (called *gao*) is not about making and selling printed paper posters of famous paintings, as Western museums do. It is about making replica paintings in the original medium (such as oil), “originals” to be sold at affordable prices.

In her book, *Van Gogh on Demand*, Winnie Won Yin Wong explains that in Shenzhen’s Dafen Village, an art copying hub, there are very strong discourses of originality, authorship, craft, and artisanal skill at work in the copying market. The Chinese market, Wong argues, challenges the codes of valuing original art in the same way that the conceptual art we have discussed does, and these Dafen works are more appropriately viewed as readymades than as simple copies. While the Dafen artists are anonymous, they also negotiate authorship of their work (sometimes actually signing it). Thus, they are, Wong writes, “being asked to literally enact the effects of the death of the author by *authorlessly* painting the text for the interpretation of more privileged readers.”²⁸



FIG. 5.25

An artist at the Impression Gallery in the Dafen Artist Village, Shenzhen, China, paints replicas of some of Van Gogh’s most famous works, June 12, 2014

Reproduction and the Digital Image

The digital image raises questions of reproduction and copyright to new levels of intensity. The digital camera has no negative, no “original” storage medium from which copies are made. Digital images differ from analog photographic images in ways that affect how they look, how they are generated, stored, and distributed, and the kinds of devices (digital cameras, mobile phones, computers, tablets,

websites) on which they can be created and displayed. Yet in many ways digital images are used like analog photographic images once were—as forms of personal expression, for family portraiture, and as documentary evidence.

By definition, analog images bear a physical correspondence to their material referents. An analog photograph gains its power in part through the sense that it is a trace of a real presence. Analog images, such as photographs and analog video images, are defined by properties that express value along a continuous scale, such as gradations of tone (or changes in intensity through increasing or decreasing voltage in video); thus, analog signals can be regulated gradually, by “knob twisting,” for instance. One way to see this is to consider the difference between an analog clock that measures time on a continuum in a circular fashion and a digital clock that counts forward in numeral increments. A traditional silver-based analog photograph is primarily composed of “grain,” or numerous dots that together form the lights, darks, contrasts, and shapes of a recognizable image. In digital cameras, the roll of negative film is replaced with an electronic image sensor and storage microchip. The roll form has a long history that includes cinema film and the printed papyrus; its association with photography ends with this transition to a unit of reproduction that takes the form of a tiny chip on which hundreds of images can be stored in minute code, deleted, and replaced.

The significance of the negative as “original” stems not just from the fact that the negative was “there” at the take with the filmed object (we could argue that the chip was there as well) but that when a film negative is copied, there is degeneration of the “original” image. Multiple positive prints from the same negative will have about the same image quality, because all are one generation away from the negative. The information on the digital chip is not subject to degeneration because it is code that can be used to generate images without any loss of detail. This code can be copied, downloaded onto multiple storage devices, and moved from device to device without any loss of image quality. With the digital camera, then, reproducibility is built into the form in a way that eliminates dependence on a single original medium (the negative) from which the work derives. For this reason, the digital photograph breaks even further than did the analog photograph from the ideology of the original work. Not only is the digital photograph highly reproducible, but reproducibility is embodied in the form.

Traditional analog cameras produce images that must be processed and developed. Image development historically required processing in a lab or darkroom, with the photographer or photo processor working alone in the dark with pans of chemicals. In the late 1940s, the Polaroid Corporation introduced a single reflex Land camera that could take unique photographic images that would develop on their own almost instantly, without a lab or printing. Initially, the consumer would pull the exposed sheet of paper out of the camera through a slot that forced the exposed side to press against a sheet covered with developing fluid. After a set time, the consumer would pull the sheet of chemicals off, revealing a fully developed photograph, a unique original. Polaroid sold itself as a hip product in the 1960s, aligning its instant images with swinger culture (exemplified by its “Swinger” model pictured here), parties, sex, and art.

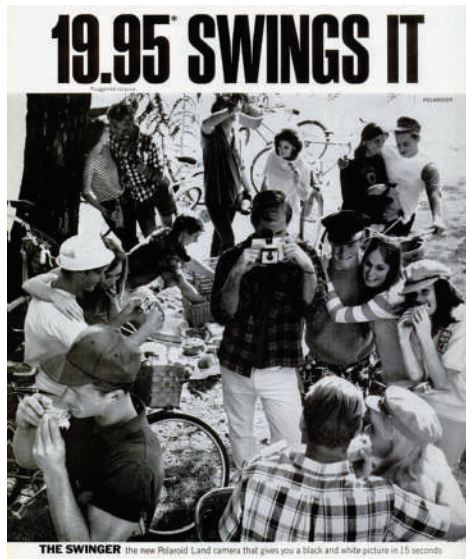


FIG. 5.26
Polaroid Land camera “the Swinger”
ad, 1967



FIG. 5.27
Visitor examines blow-up of a
1974 Polaroid photo by Italian
photographer Oliviero Toscani
of Andy Warhol in the exhibition
“The Polaroid Collection” at
NRW-Forum in Düsseldorf,
Germany, May 2012

In 1972 Polaroid released the one-step SX-70 Land camera, in which the image developed directly on the exposed sheet. This very popular aspect of the one-step SX-70 would help to create the idea of the instant sharing of images as a key aspect of their value. Polaroid ads promoted the idea that the one-step SX-70 was great in social events, making the photographer the center of attention as crowds gathered to watch the image magically develop before their eyes. Christopher Makos, the photographer who taught Andy Warhol to use the SX-70, told Polaroid in 2010: “The Polaroid was so cool at the time. We would all just take pictures of each other and pass them around, sort of the way that people pass around images on Facebook.”²⁹ The incitement to sharing that we now see on social media is a context in which we might say that images are only perceived as valuable if they are seen and “liked” by others.³⁰ While Polaroid is now bankrupt, as is Kodak, their legacies can be charted directly into digital imaging. Instagram quite self-consciously charts its lineage to Polaroid with its original logo explicitly referencing the Polaroid SX-70.

The digital camera, whether on a smartphone or alone, also allows the photographer and others to see the image instantly, as a positive rather than a negative. Here we tie back to an earlier technology as this positive evokes the camera obscura’s mirror effect, in which the image seen is the one instantly projected onto the chamber’s surface. Because the digital image is instantly viewable, available for immediate distribution, circulation, and manipulation, it has altered conventional photography’s “that has been” effect



FIG. 5.28
Original Instagram logo, referenc-
ing the Polaroid SX-70 logo

(the “noeme”), as defined by Roland Barthes. This opens up possibilities for “creative geography.” This concept of creative geography was illustrated by the Soviet filmmaker Lev Kuleshov in 1922, who intercut images of pedestrians walking (in Moscow and Washington, D.C.), one to the right and one to the left, to give the spectator the sense that the two are in the same geographic space walking toward each other and will meet up. In digital programs such as Photoshop, it is easy to place yourself in locales that you have never visited or that do not exist in a kind of virtual tourism (see fig. 1.13), echoing the practice of tourist self-documentation and fantasy in the nineteenth-century European World Exposition displays featuring the peoples and wares of faraway colonized places. The real of experience and being in a place and time is minimized as imagined, fantasy relationships come to the fore as the substance of these creative compositions. At the same time, the real, understood to be tied to the images’ materiality, loses its significance a bit. The rare and cherished old photographs of your grandmother as a child, the original faded prints crumbling in the family album, may decompose as objects, but they may be preserved as code in a digital file that can be stored, copied, emailed, or shared on Facebook. The image becomes timeless in the sense that it can be preserved in a reproducible digital copy that will not erode over time because it is no longer a singular ephemeral material object.

The capacity for manipulation and multiple contextualizations is not new, of course. It has always been possible to “fake” realism in photographs, as we saw in 1.13. Many early photographers played with manipulation. In 1858, in photography’s second decade as a popular medium, the British photographer Henry Peach Robinson exhibited *Fading Away*, a photograph of a young girl with consumption (tuberculosis). This 1858 portrayal of a young woman dying, surrounded by her grieving relatives, was actually a composite of five images constructed to convey what such a scene might look like. Until the 1990s, however, tools for manipulating and recontextualizing the analog photograph remained, for the most part, restricted to commercial and fine art photographers. Commercial photographers often used airbrushing and other professional techniques to reframe, “clean up,” combine, and modify their photographs. These techniques have now been transferred to a broader market. Today, it is common practice to have personal photographs digitally reconfigured, to remove now out-of-favor relatives from wedding pictures, or to erase ex-boyfriends from treasured images. In many cases, this kind of toying with the historical record is relatively harmless. Yet we can also imagine a context in which all historical images are even more available for manipulation than they have been in the past. What changed with the digital photograph is not the ability to manipulate the image but the wide availability and accessibility of these techniques to the consumer, making not just image production but also image reproduction and alteration an everyday aspect of consumer experience.

In many ways, digital technology has ushered us from the age of reproduction to the age of simulation. In his classic 1981 text *Simulacra and Simulation*, the



FIG. 5.29

Henry Peach Robinson, *Fading Away*, 1858 (albumen silver print from five glass negatives, $9\frac{5}{8} \times 15\frac{1}{2}$ ")

French philosopher Jean Baudrillard proposed that in the digital era simulation, rather than reproduction, is the paradigm of our condition of being. As we discuss further in Chapter 8, whereas a representation finds its original referent in the real, a simulation generates a new “real” without an original.

The digital image changes the image’s relationship not only to the real but also to personal and cultural memory. Consider the changing status of the photographic print. Before the 1990s, the print sent home from the drugstore photo lab might have included a duplicate set, so a copy could be passed along to a family member while the original was logged in the family album, as well as the “original” negative. Now the “album” exists in the form of digital copies shared seemingly without limit on social media, all of equal quality, with no recourse to any original. Social media companies such as Facebook structure their sites to encourage users to think of them as photo albums of personal memories. The family photo album has thus moved online. Control over its future archiving, access, and reuse is beyond the control of the user in social media, even with the use of privacy settings. Digital archives are thus a new way of making history and memory, produced from a memory bank without recourse to the ideal of an original or even a negative instantiation of the real.

The proliferation of personal images’ public display on websites, blogs, social media, and photo platforms such as Flickr has also produced a new relationship between the personal image, commercial photography, and public space. Millions of personal snapshots proliferate on the web, available for public consumption and security searches. Programs offer systems for tagging images and connecting them, allowing us to make new classifications and histories. We assume the role of image

connoisseurs and curators as we download images and link to them on sites like Pinterest, but those sites archive our choices for commercial research about taste. This sharing of images essentially transforms not only the means by which people use images to publicly tell their personal stories but also the relationship of archives and image institutions to the vast range of online visual resources. While the selling of generic images through stock photography companies and the business of image rights and permissions continues to thrive, there is an increasing number of open-access online digital archives. The Library of Congress uploaded part of its image collection to Flickr in 2008 so that its historical images could become part of that site's image environment and a source of user comments and connections in the public domain. Creative Commons was created in 2001 to provide a shared archive of images licensed for free public use. Wikipedia (through Wikimedia Commons) has become a repository of Creative Commons images for use with a standardized system of citation and credit. All of these developments have implications for cultural memory, "found" footage, images and the rights and politics of using them, and the role of the personal digital image in the public sphere.

Peirce's concept of the indexical quality of signs (discussed in Chapter 1) gives us another way to understand the changes that have taken place with digital technology. As we have noted, the analog photograph's power is derived largely from its indexical qualities. The camera has coexisted in physical space with the "real" that it has photographed. Many digital images and all simulations lack this indexical relationship to what they represent. For instance, an image in which people are digitally inserted into a landscape where they have never been does not refer to something that has been. As we noted in Chapter 1, it is relatively easy to create images of a fake experience. This raises the question of what happens to the idea of photographic truth when an image that looks like a photograph is created on a computer with no camera at all. In Peirce's terms, this marks a fundamental shift in meaning from the photograph, with its explicit reference to reproduction, and the digital image, which moves us into a realm where simulation may precede and bring to life the real.

Questions of the verifiability and manipulability of images take on particular importance in the context of photojournalism and documentary photography, where pre-digital notions of photographic truth still hold sway. These notions include the idea that photojournalism should be realistic and relatively unmanipulated. Discoveries that a news organization or individual photographer has altered an image in ways that significantly change the original image or the meaning of an event have sparked scandal and debate. The question turns on what constitutes significant change. Photojournalist organizations have produced increasingly detailed guidelines for any manipulation of photographs, guidelines that call into question practices that have had long uncontroversial histories in photojournalism. The debate has brought forward larger questions about the notions of objectivity attached to images published in journalistic contexts. Most news organizations have instituted policies about digital manipulation, and discussions about whether to mandate labeling of images

produced with digital manipulation have been underway since the early 1990s. A policy statement in the *Washington Post* stated in the early 2000s:

Photography has come to be trusted as a virtual record of an event. We must never betray that trust. It is our policy never to alter the content of news photographs. Normal adjustment to contrast and gray scale for better reproduction is permitted. This means that nothing is added or subtracted from the image such as a hand or tree limb in an inopportune position.³¹

Yet assertions such as this raise questions such as what constitutes a virtual record, what counts as content and what counts as form, what is normal adjustment, and what techniques have garnered public trust, and mistrust, in the history of journalistic photography.

Numerous cases of manipulation by photojournalists have caused controversy in recent years, including Photoshop restructuring of images. *Der Zeitung*, a Brooklyn-based Hasidic newspaper, sparked criticism after it published a retouched version of an official U.S. White House press photograph taken by Pete Souza. The original image showed President Barack Obama and staff in the Situation Room watching a real-time satellite feed from the mission to kill Osama Bin Laden in 2011. In keeping with Jewish modesty laws, the editors doctored the image to remove the two women present, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Audrey Tomason, Director for Counterterrorism. The two versions then circulated widely on social media. This kind of manipulation recalls the history of the erasure of out-of-favor political figures from official photographs of the Soviet Union, yet it is also evidence of the ease with which digital images can be altered and still appear authentic.

In 2015, the *New York Times* reported that about 20 percent of the images selected for the final round of judging for the annual World Press Photo competition



(a)

FIG. 5.30

(a) Official White House photograph of U.S. President Obama and staff watching live feed of raid on Osama bin Laden compound, May 2, 2011; (b) White House photograph in Fig. 5.30 A altered to erase Hillary Clinton and Audrey Tomason, published in *Der Zeitung*, May 6, 2011



(b)

were disqualified for significant alteration of the image in post-processing, a finding that reportedly shocked the judges, raising once again the same questions about photojournalism's standards of practice in the digital era. Practices such as Photoshop manipulation and excessive toning, used to darken parts of the image to make elements within it invisible, were cited, as was the apparently relatively common practice of photographers "staging" or setting up images that were supposed to be documentary. The jury chairperson reported that many jury members felt lied to and cheated. She spoke with the urgency felt by many in the industry when she concluded, "we have to do something, but I don't know yet what that is."³² Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the photographers felt they had done nothing wrong, with some of them arguing that these techniques were no different from standard image cropping. In the debate that followed, many involved insisted that the idea of objective photojournalism was "philosophically tenuous in a postmodern world."³³

It is ironic, though not surprising, that news photojournalism, which is said to have begun with documentation of the Crimean and Civil Wars, has been subject to shrinking revenues and layoffs even as stock photo companies have vastly grown. These companies, which include Getty Images and Corbis (founded in 1989 by Microsoft executive Bill Gates), rose to prominence by purchasing hundreds of smaller image archives and amassing large collections from which images can be reproduced for a fee. As stock images become the go-to source for illustrating news stories, the photojournalist must compete with this source and with citizen photographers ready to hand their images over to the news media for free. There are more photos circulating today than ever, but in their re-use they command a lower price. The specificity of the image is seen to matter less. In 2015, an image circulating through news organizations on social media purporting to show rioting in Baltimore after the death of Freddie Gray while in police custody was revealed to have been taken the year before in Venezuela. Such practices have led some to declare photojournalism to be a dying field.³⁴

3D Reproduction and Simulation

In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard suggests that, with the rise of media technologies for making models of the real, the relationship between the model (the map) and the real social territory it charts changed in the postwar years of the twentieth century. As we entered a postmodern era characterized by media and technologies of simulation, we lost sight of "the real." Our confidence in referents and originals declined as we came to accept simulation as a precedent to the real. Baudrillard writes, "By crossing into a space whose curvature is no longer that of the real, nor that of truth, the era of simulation is inaugurated by a liquidation of all referentials. . . . It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real."³⁵

To better understand the notion of simulation in the production of the real, we turn to the technology of the 3D printer, a technology widely lauded in the 2010s for its standing at the cutting of reproduction. While 3D imaging has proliferated in

the Hollywood film industry, there it is largely a throwback medium, with viewers wearing the same 3D glasses in movie theaters that they did in the 1950s. 3D printing, however, is proposed to be revolutionary. The technology is designed to bring home to the consumer and artist the ability to manufacture goods and products. Planned obsolescence of goods will be eliminated, it is speculated, because we will be able to replace broken parts with parts we manufacture at home on our own printers. Global industry logics will shift as manufacturing becomes personalized and consumers become producers of their own goods, no longer requiring goods to be shipped from distant factories. Not only are we prosumers of media, we are also prosumers of material things. What are the implications of such claims for the current era defined by an ethos in which the model or simulation may precede the real?

The American theorist of technology Mark Poster wrote about the “mode of information” introduced by the mechanical moveable-type printing press, a technology introduced in the fifteenth century that made possible the mass production of printed books in Europe, inaugurating the modern era of mass communication. The commercial press was associated, in the long era of mechanical printing, with a 2D culture that featured the flat page and the copy: word and image are rendered in series of identically sized pages, and each volume is reproduced in multiple copies. The nineteenth-century industrial printer offered the potential to escalate this copy culture. Advances in the capability of computers as machines for processing and compositing information brought the introduction of digital printers, machines that in their first iterations in the 1950s were fed data compressed into code onto reels of magnetic tape, which were “read” by the printer to generate output.

3D printing from blueprints and prototypes or samples, under the name of “rapid prototyping,” has been a common practice in industrial design and manufacture since the 1950s. But when patents for the 3D printing methods began to expire in the 2010s, 3D printing emerged as an increasingly lucrative new consumer technology. The phenomenon of three-dimensional objects emerging from new home technologies was promoted as something of a print-industry surprise during this decade. It was billed as a boost to the consumer, who could visit a 3D printing service at Staples and UPS stores, or who might even own his or her own home 3D printer. These machines make things, not representations; they generate dimensional objects, not images. The fabricated object stands in the place that was previously held by the printed page or the photograph. Lamination is one of various 3D printing techniques available. In the lamination process, the printer builds up the object in layers, much like the stacked pages of a book. This 3D printed object (fig. 5.31) designed with the LEBLOX app plays on Marcel Duchamp’s famous “readymade,” *Fountain* (Fig. 2.14), a found urinal that Duchamp wittily repurposed as fine art in 1917 and which has been the subject of numerous remakes and parodies ever since.

In this chapter we have shown how the modes of reproduction and representation were supplanted by a mode of simulation in which the code or model precedes the real. 3D printing follows this logic of simulation by generating objects not only out of preexisting objects as models, but also out of codes, blueprints, or



FIG. 5.31

3D-printed urinal figure recalling Duchamp's 1917 readymade *Fountain* (Fig. 2.14), designed using LEBLOX 3D prototyping app and printed by FabZat

coordinates, formulas from which the original prototype is made. In this sense, the “real” of the system is in fact the blueprint or model, which stands in the place of the original as the valuable commodity. The true commodity is in fact the data, the patent or blueprint from which multiple “originals” can be made. The patent or blueprint, and not the object, is thus the true “expression of the idea.” Thus, the technology of the 3D printer is something of a Trojan horse that brought the commodity form back into the mode of information from inside the computer, a machine long held to have dematerialized information and the art object.

The 3D printer can also be seen as part of the DIY (do-it-yourself) trend, which we discuss further in Chapter 7. Some proponents claim that 3D printing will revolutionize manufacturing by bringing production from the factory floor to the private home, where we will manu-

facture parts and goods where and when we need them, making mass production and reproduction (at least of small parts) an outmoded way of living with our gadgets and machines. We may regard this utopian claim with skepticism but should nonetheless heed the economic and social implications of a technology that suggests we are moving beyond the mass-production model of the industrial age into a new era of artisanal technology.

Art practice was also changed by the introduction of 3D printers to the market in the 2010s. Sculpture traditionally has been rendered in wood, clay, stone, or other materials by hand or with machines. Techniques and equipment for die casting, grinding, deburring, drilling, and forging can be combined with computerized robotic controls and features that can be programmed to perform much of the labor previously done by hand or mechanical devices. The 3D printer makes it possible to program the machine to scan and render from digital coordinates with a very high degree of detail, precise enough to capture something as fine as an eyelash or a fingerprint. Replicas can be generated in different sizes. 3D printers also make it possible to generate assembly of very large forms quickly and in far less time than previously has been possible.

In 2015, the California-based British sculptor Anya Gallaccio, who typically works with organic materials such as flowers, ice, rock, and dirt, built an assembly machine connected to a 3D printer to generate a site-specific clay installation in a large gallery of the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego. The title of the work, *Beautiful Minds*, invokes the beauty of the futuristic precision technology meeting the beauty of the organic material, clay, which follows its own earthen logic. Over the course of the exhibition, visitors could step in and watch as an industrial extruder spit out coils of soft water-based clay, assembling over a period of weeks a distant replica of the iconic Devil's Tower, a volcanic geologic formation with



FIG. 5.32

Installation view of *Beautiful Minds* by Anya Gallaccio at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, 2015 (water-based clay, 3D printer, extruder, aluminum beams)

strange linear striations that looms 1,200 feet above the flat plains of Wyoming. The mountain itself is weirdly futuristic, appearing in movies such as *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Gallaccio invoked its strange form with 3D printer-generated coils of water-based clay that built up into honeycomb-like formations over days according to programmed coordinates.

Rather than taking the exact form of the monument, the copy succumbs to the vagaries of the unstable material and the humidity and temperature of the space. The coils flop over loosely in some places and dry out and crack in others as the machine plods on, spitting out clay in carefully timed intervals. Visitors who returned to the site over the course of weeks caught different phases of construction, with the end goal not the finished assemblage so much as the evidence of the process itself in all of its lopsided serendipity. The celebrated exactness of the 3D copy and the vaunted precision of the 3D printing machine come undone under the pressures of the natural as the earthen clay failed to stay within the limits of either the blueprint or the original mountain formation.

In this chapter we have followed the story of the copy through mechanical reproduction, ownership, and simulation in ways that take us through particular trajectories of technological development and ways of understanding technology. Visual culture rises in modernity through the modern technologies of visibility, vision, and image. In the next chapter we look at how the history of mass culture and the mass media has also been transformed through technological development, digital media, and changing social roles of the producer and the consumer.

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Media in Everyday Life

media are pervasive in most of our lives, yet we tend to take them for granted. Many of us experience on a daily basis mobile phones, social media, the web, television, and news. With the integration of mobile phones into everyday life, and people receiving their news electronically, the fields of journalism, newspaper and magazine publishing, and television news are increasingly changing as their models for reaching readers and audiences (and their revenue models) have been dramatically disrupted by digital media practices. In this chapter we consider the media as a set of social forms and practices of looking that engage us in our everyday lives.

The Media, Singular and Plural

Media is the plural form of *medium*, which describes the means or technology used for storing and communicating information and other configurations of data and text, such as narrative. The term has been used since the sixteenth century, when it connoted a permeable membrane or intermediate agency, such as the wall of a blood vessel. Medium is also used to describe a psychic, a person who channels a dead person's spirit, making it audible and visible through expression and gesture. All of these meanings suggest intervening layers through which something flows.

Although it is a plural term, media is often used as a singular noun. We speak of the media, or the mass media. These singular forms include different media (or mediums) such as the news, radio, film, television, the web, and mobile phones. We may also include in this group playable media, such as computer games, a form that began to approach mainstream popularity in the late 1970s. In 2015, gaming generated \$91.5 billion in revenue, with China and the United States each contributing a quarter of that figure. Clearly the game industry is a mass media industry. But these different forms of media are not all consonant with one another. Games may be played on a computer, game console, tablet, or phone—all different forms

of media. News media is similarly produced on, packaged through, and circulated in a variety of media forms. The news has been traditionally printed on a press and distributed through newspapers, but today it is more likely consumed as television coverage circulating on news websites and Twitter feeds. In the media of sound, the news has long been circulated on the radio, broadcast by airwaves, satellite, or over the Internet and is now played on radios, computers, and phones. The radio podcast exemplifies the increasingly individual nature of media consumption—one listener on their own time schedule, rather than listening simultaneously with others. The news is increasingly visual, with news websites using video and photography and television news often consumed via computer screens. There are many modes of media today, which define different, increasingly individual audiences, listeners, and viewers. As we discuss in this chapter, media today involve an exchange between media consumers and media producers, rather than a one-way communication.

Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan foreshadowed this broader understanding of media when he proposed in the 1960s that media include forms other than radio, television, cinema, and the press. For McLuhan, a medium is a technological form that extends the self.¹ In this definition, media include technologies such as cars, trains, light bulbs, and even vocal and gestured or signed speech. Media are forms through which we amplify, accelerate, and prosthetically extend our bodies for information communication and cultural transmission. A medium is not a neutral technology through which meanings, messages, and information are channeled unmodified. The medium itself, whether that medium is a voice or a technology such as television, has a major impact on the meaning it conveys. There is no such thing as a message without a medium or a message that is not affected by its medium.

Media convergence is a concept that became widely used in the twenty-first century to describe the coming together of previously separate media forms and industries through computing and digital technology.² Whereas movies were historically made on celluloid (analog) film and screened in movie theaters outside the home, they are now produced and screened digitally and often watched at home on computers, the same device through which we may write and communicate. The digital technology industry and the film industry have thus converged. But convergence did not originate in the digital era. Convergence moments have existed throughout media history. During the first half of the twentieth century, film newsreels sometimes preceded feature films at movie theaters, serving as educational entertainment. In the United States during the 1960s and 1970s, feature films and cartoons produced for movie theaters were sometimes syndicated for television broadcast after their theatrical run. This was a kind of proto-convergence practice, a crossover of film and television industry domains and cultures. Films, used as television programming, expediently filled nonprimetime slots without production costs, and fresh income was thus generated from old media.

In the twentieth century, multiple forms of media converged as never before, facilitated by the digital turn and the rise of the personal computer as a platform for multiple functions previously consigned to different industry areas and different genres of consumption and use. In the twentieth century, movies, radio and television programs, and computer games were consumed via distinct venues and devices. By the twenty-first century, all of these media forms could be stored on digital platforms and consumed via the web. This has been facilitated by increased broadband networks and the creation of vast storage options (known as the “cloud”). Although the cloud implies something ephemeral and immaterial, digital storage (owned by Apple, Google, and other major tech companies) entails the use of vast energy-consuming physical servers spanning multiple geographical sites. These servers extend our computer memory beyond the personal hard drive, storing data for access from many places and supporting activities like streaming videos. Movies and television programs, previously accessible at theaters or through television supported by syndicated programming or home video setups, may be watched on any computing device through subscription services such as Netflix and Hulu. The distribution market converged with production when online distributors like Netflix began to produce original works (“content”) such as the series *Orange Is the New Black* in 2013.

The market in print media and book distribution and film and television media distribution converged when Amazon, which began as an online bookseller, began to sell first video cassettes and then streaming video along with offering products such as household goods, furniture, electronics, clothing, and food. As media industries converge, mediation and consumption become entwined. Amazon took convergence a step further when it entered into television production in 2013 with original series marketed solely through its Prime Video market. These series include *Transparent*, a situation comedy directed by Jill Soloway that centers on a Los Angeles family whose father is in the process of coming out as a trans woman. Convergence entails not only the intersections of media platforms but also intersections of industry sectors, genres, and media forms. Even family photographs became re-mediated when analog photographs stored in boxes and albums were given a new life as digitized and shared image files, first through CDs, hard drives, and email attachments, and then on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, where they remain archived under licensing agreements that give these companies the rights to collect, store, and use them. Media convergence has escalated in the digital era in ways that are unprecedented in scope and scale.

Media is a big, changeable, and messy concept. Everyday media include the phone, a device that today serves a multitude of functions that used to be performed through different instruments. The mobile phone is also a clock, navigation device, personal calendar, and gaming platform. It is a computing platform that ties us to social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat). It brings us advertising, email, and text messages. You may read books and listen to music on your phone.

It is a source for personal communication, news, reference checking, and research. In the contemporary media environment, we experience fewer distinctions between media forms and genres—via digital technology, they are consumed together and simultaneously, on the same devices and in individual ways. As we will discuss further, the key concepts that have defined media over the last century—mass culture, mass media, and audience—are now in flux.

Everyday Life

A key way to frame this new world of media consumption is to consider the media as a wide-ranging set of forms, technologies, and practices through which we experience everyday life. In 1982, media theorist John Caughey noted that “otherwise diverse studies of everyday life typically share the assumption that ordinary life is not, as it seems, an ordinary or natural phenomenon, but rather a complex process in need of exploration and explanation.”³ To consider everyday life, we must focus on media. Everyday life is, as we have noted in the previous paragraphs, highly and increasingly mediated. Our concern is not only how we make meaning through our practices of looking at things that are made to be looked at (like art or films), but also how media inform everyday practice.

This concern with everyday practice was brought into cultural theory by Michel de Certeau in his 1980 book *The Practice of Everyday Life*.⁴ De Certeau studied how people live through everyday activities like navigating city streets. During the 1980s, most culture scholars working on media were emphasizing experiences with media objects, such as film viewing, or art and taste. De Certeau shifted the focus from forms of media to the overall field of experience in which we negotiate our environment. Our bodies are immersed in mediation with the spaces, objects, and technologies of everyday life. He foregrounded the everyday ways in which ordinary people move through spaces of the everyday, which are designed by city planners to facilitate order and to serve the interests of business and law. Rather than talking about making and doing as the activities of the artist or producer, and rather than discussing consumption as a passive act of simply watching or looking, De Certeau proposed that we regard the human subject as a mobile, mediated, and mediating subject who engages in the world by negotiating spaces, making them “habitable.” In a famous chapter of his book, “Walking in the City,” De Certeau introduces walking as a practice of social mediation. He shows how the city is built by civic government and private industry and held together by policy and design but intercepted and negotiated by the ordinary human subject who walks (or uses a wheelchair, we might add), appropriating the urban network and structures in ways he described as tactical, not always following the order and logic of the city. That ordered structure is visible in its grid-like abstraction from the god’s-eye view above (as we noted in Chapter 3, de Certeau’s example is a view from the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center). But down on the ground, the city appears much

more messy. In other words, people mediate the city by engaging its built forms and objects in practical and offhand ways, often outside of and against intended actions. This activity is performed not only through engagement with signs and media texts and through interpretive meaning making, but also through the mundane everyday activities of using, doing, and adapting. We may refer to McLuhan's notion of media as "extensions of man" to understand this broader use of the term. To take a shortcut, to find a workaround, is tactically to mediate the city.

How do we get from social practice to media practice? One of De Certeau's main contributions was this shift in understanding of mediation from the form or object to the practices through which we use things. Media practice, or the mediation of culture, may be as simple as walking, or using what McLuhan calls "extensions": shoes, a cane, a wheelchair, a bus, a bike, a car, a map, a GPS system, a human guide—all of these are forms of media through which we negotiate social space. Engagement with "the media" even in the more conventional sense of the news and entertainment media industries involves re-mediation tactics. We are users and negotiators, mediators and remediators, and not just producers and consumers of the media in our worlds.

Mass Culture and Mass Media

The concept of "the masses" was introduced in the nineteenth century to describe the growing underclass of people who labored in factories during the rise of capitalist industrial society. The industrial worker typically had little or no capital, did not own property or the means of production, and earned a living by selling their physical labor. In Marxist political theory, "the masses" has been used as a singular concept, a synonym for "the people" or the proletariat, a term introduced in 1850s France to describe the propertyless industrial wage earners who emerged as a class distinct from both the landless agricultural worker (the peasant class) and the bourgeoisie (the property-owning class). In the nineteenth century, many of the bourgeoisie of Europe and the newly rich railroad magnates and landowners of the United States used their wealth to build factories, luring agricultural workers to manufacturing jobs that yielded mass-produced products. These industrialists invested their capital in the means of production, and then exploited worker labor. U.S. factory owners lured propertyless peasants and workers from Europe with the promise of more plentiful jobs, seeming to offer land ownership opportunities and class mobility as well. Factory owners enlisted children as laborers and paid wages too low to cover housing and food for an individual, much less a family. Sold for more than the cost of overhead, raw materials, and wages, the goods that workers created reaped profits for the factory owner but left the low-paid factory worker exhausted and with barely enough money to survive. The working class swelled into what journalists began to call "the teeming masses" as cities began to fill with factory, office, and shop workers, many of them single and living apart from their

families back in Europe or on the rural farm. These were the alienated workers, as we noted in Chapter 3, of Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* and King Vidor's *The Crowd*—factory and office laborers who headed out alone into the streets seeking relief, distraction, and cheap amusements with the meager leisure time and money available to them. Twentieth-century media industries of the cinema, radio, and television rose up to cater to “mass society.” Cheaply made, entertaining, light fare that could be mass-produced and mass-circulated thrived in the cinema palaces and appealed to members of the working class and middle class (the same middle class that has declined in numbers due to today's neoliberal economy).

The idea of a monolithic “mass culture” is linked to the period of modernity and industrialization in which national newspapers, a national cinema, and national radio and television broadcast media shaped culture in industrialized nations and locations where this media was exported. In the United States, mass culture arose through periods of intense corporate growth and monopoly formation. The printing press generated newspapers, magazines, and popular novels for broad mass circulation, to be sold in urban newsstands. The cinema, introduced in 1895, quickly appealed to the expanding concentration of workers. Radio, introduced in the 1920s, and television, introduced in the 1940s, relied on broadcast formats that transmitted from one or a few sources to many individual listeners and viewers, carrying the same mass entertainment programming to millions of individual homes. In the postwar years, the concentration of the working class in the city and the expansion of the middle class outward to the suburbs were paralleled by the rise of corporate monopolies and the emergence of transnational cartels. Media industries both provoked and catered to the emotional, psychological, and practical desires of the urban masses for entertainment, news, and distractions from work.

The term “mass media” refers to forms of communication that reach large numbers of people in a relatively short timeframe. It has been used since the 1920s to describe media forms designed to reach large audiences—groups perceived to have shared interests. It also refers to the conventions in which audiences receive regularly programmed entertainment shows or news about world events, usually from a centralized mass distribution source such as a newspaper corporation, television network, major film studio, or news and entertainment media conglomerate. The primary mass media forms during the twentieth century were the cinema, radio, network and cable television, and the press (including newspapers and magazines). During that century, visual images and time-based media came to dominate mass media markets.

Throughout most of the Cold War period, communication scholars critiqued mass media for its production of propaganda, focusing particularly on authoritarian and totalitarian regimes' effective use of this strategy. The quintessential example is the use of film and poster art to support the rise of Nazism in Germany prior to World War II. For example, German film director Leni Riefenstahl produced propaganda films designed to enlist the German masses in the Nazi Party ethos. Her 1935

film *Triumph of the Will* documents a 1934 Nazi rally in Nuremberg that she attended and documented.

This film is one of the most powerful examples of the use of time-based images to instill political beliefs in its audience. The 1934 rally was planned as a mass visual spectacle. Adolf Hitler, who served as the film's executive producer, had the rally choreographed and filmed with aerial photography, telephoto lenses, multiple cameras, and an elaborate tracking-shot system. His strategy was to use staging, framing, and camera movement to give the impression that the whole nation was united behind him, when in fact at this moment his party had just experienced a major challenge from the National Socialist Party. The film is composed of shots featuring imposingly dramatic compositions. Hitler figures centrally in most of the shots. He is either the implied master eye behind god's-eye point of view shots that convey a totalizing gaze, or he is at the center of the composition, immersed in a sea of admiring subjects whose eyes all point to him. The film opens with grand aerial tracking footage of Hitler's plane swooping in over the city, intercut with shots of the city from the plane's-eye view as Hitler scopes out his domain. We later see many shots of Hitler in the crowds, taken from a low camera angle that makes the spectator literally look up to him, emphasizing his stature and charisma. *Triumph of the Will* is an example of the ways that practices of looking can uphold nationalism and idolatry in real time (staged events) as well as through images and recordings that involve editing and framing. The concept of the media as propaganda is one approach to understanding the mass media's historic ties to the promotion of mass ideology. By analyzing the composition and orchestration of sets, performances, and film texts such as this, we can better understand how a populace may be crafted into an undifferentiated mass audience.

We may think of this kind of propaganda as unique to totalitarian regimes, but the repression of thought through the media has a long and global history. In the United States, a formidable mass media industry was established by the mid-twentieth century, one with global reach decades prior to late-century privatization, mergers, production outsourcing, and trade globalization. Dubbed the "American Century" by media mogul Henry Luce, the twentieth century saw the rise of communications and media systems as central mechanisms in the ascendance of the United States as a global superpower. The postwar period, during which digital technologies and information culture were undergoing development, was a time of intensified intellectual and political repression in the United States. Communication scholar Angharad N. Valdivia reminds us that at mid-century,

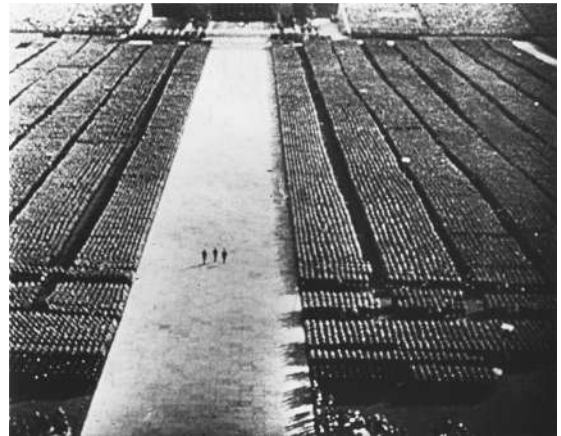


FIG. 6.1

Screen shot from the film *Triumph of the Will*, dir. Leni Riefenstahl, 1935

U.S. scholars and critics were subjected to “red-baiting,” a practice in which accusations of communist leanings were used to discredit progressive views and to silence dissent. In 1950, Senator Joe McCarthy publicized lists of supposed Communist Party members or sympathizers, riding a long wave of anti-communist sentiment that extended from the “Red Scare” of the late 1910s through the Cold War period. Conservatives before McCarthy had falsely equated progressive reform with communism, but he brought to this climate a high degree of showmanship and a penchant for public vilification that made his name synonymous with the communist witch hunt conducted by the government’s House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in the 1950s. McCarthyism and HUAC are legendary for their repression of political speech and their destruction of careers. Everyone was open to suspicion as accusations were not limited to politicians. HUAC targeted more than 300 people in Hollywood. Many of those investigated were quite famous as writers, directors, and actors in the media industry. Although some of those targeted, including Charlie Chaplin and Orson Welles, were able to continue their work outside the United States or by working under pseudonyms, fewer than 10 percent of the group targeted was able to resume a career in the entertainment industries. Though most active in the 1950s, HUAC lasted into the 1970s. Under its shadow, anyone critiquing the media industry’s political and economic basis risked condemnation and public censure. As Valdivia notes, during this period, “celebratory and ‘patriotic’ approaches were the only ones allowed.”⁵

Historically, media industries have formed through either private corporations that control media production and messages or government-controlled television networks. Take the case of Disney. Founded in 1923 as a cartoon studio, Disney is currently one of the world’s leading providers of entertainment and information with company assets that include television networks, theme parks, resorts, and global property holdings on almost every continent. Not only does Disney own the Walt Disney Studios, which includes Lucasfilm and the *Star Wars* franchise as well as Marvel Studios, it is part of the Disney/ABC Television Group, which includes broadcast and cable channels such as ESPN and holds a large stake in Hulu. Disney also owns many theme parks and a cruise line, and it derives a significant income from merchandizing (Disney is famous for policing intellectual property and copyright). In 2015, Disney reported \$52 billion in revenues. Similarly, Berkshire Hathaway, a company known for its CEO Warren Buffet, one of the world’s wealthiest people, owns shares in news media companies as well as clothing and food brands (including Coca-Cola and Kraft) and service companies (such as insurance). The rise in size and scope of media companies parallels the global and cross-industry expansion of corporate ownership’s range and scope.

Yet the dynamics of media control have shifted profoundly in the last ten years in ways that do not always reflect this explosion in acquisition of holdings. Events are now covered and analyzed as much in Twitter feeds as they are via news sources, and the mainstream media increasingly incorporates the voices of viewer-users into

their coverage. Some television or print news stories are released online with a number of Twitter quotes within them, including text and images, making the news effectively a multiplatform industry. Yet this dynamic has generated niche information worlds in which people consume news from an increasingly limited set of sources—which many commentators see as increasing polarizing politics. Today, consumers are more likely to regard themselves as potential media producers, as well as consumers who exercise choice.

As Western industrial culture progressed into the twentieth century, the locus of taste and the ethos of mass media shifted to the suburbs. Public culture was no longer an urban phenomenon contained in the department store, concert hall, movie theater, and city hall. Suburban mall culture facilitated consumption of mass manufactured goods by the suburban masses. One could watch mass broadcast television “along with” others in the nation from one’s own living room. Films could also be consumed in the new mall-based cinemas, which were larger than their urban counterparts, attracting consumers who traveled in the family car from distant suburbs. Film industries based in Hollywood, Bollywood, and Hong Kong sought out global markets for their films just as mass manufacturers such as Nike, Apple, and Levi sought out global markets for their goods. Even before World War II, Hollywood film production had become multinational by installing production units and studios in European locations. As we discuss in Chapter 10, film industries in Mumbai (with its Bollywood film center) and Hong Kong have vied with Hollywood for dominance in the global media market. This global mass culture film industry escalated dramatically in the last two decades of the twentieth century, which saw the release of multinational features such as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, a 2000 U.S.-Chinese co-produced martial arts film that includes three languages: Mandarin, English, and French. In 2016, this film remained the highest grossing foreign language film (co-)produced by the U.S. film industry. With this turn to a global mass audience and media convergence, media markets continued to expand. In 2012, the global media market was valued at \$1.73 trillion, a figure predicted to reach \$2.15 trillion by 2020.

Critiques of Mass Culture

Throughout modern media’s rise, there have been critiques of its societal role. One of the most influential critiques of the media and the industrialization of

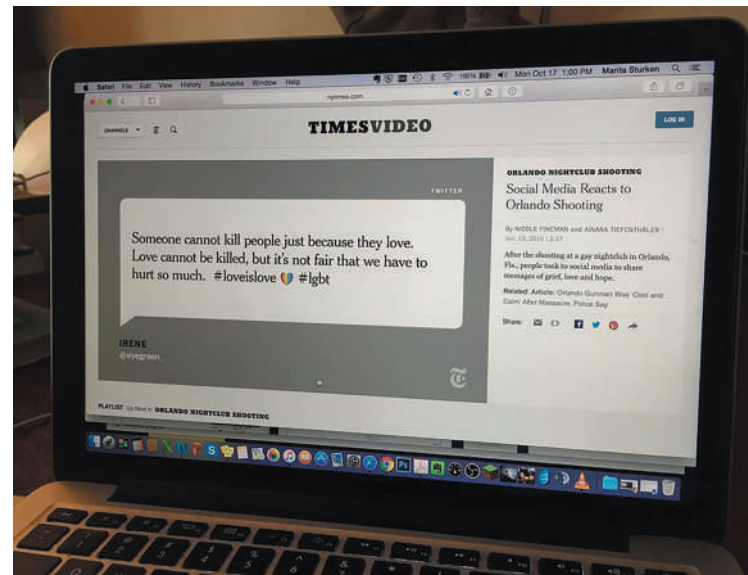


FIG. 6.2

Twitter post by a reader published in a mainstream news feed

culture came from the Frankfurt School theorists, who applied Marxist theory to the study of culture in the postwar years and whose work has been influential since the 1960s. This group, which includes Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse, among others, criticized the capitalist and consumerist orientation of postwar media forms, including popular movies, television, and advertising. Most Frankfurt School scholars had fled as Jewish refugees from 1930s Germany, where they had been associated with Frankfurt's Institute for Social Research. In 1944, Adorno and Horkheimer introduced the concepts of "mass culture" and "the culture industry," proposing that the entertainment industry deceived the laboring classes into acquiescence toward capitalism. The authors proposed that the laboring class, which largely remained uneducated due to a class society that reserved college for the upper classes until later in the twentieth century, was targeted by a mass media industry that exploited workers as passive consumers. Many university-based social scientists at the time measured media's societal impacts in propaganda and persuasion, the relationship between media and crime, and media's market potential. But few tied this mass media research to a critical political and economic theory of culture. In their important work on the culture industry, Adorno and Horkheimer regarded the masses as passive subjects and saw the industry (media producers) as the purveyors of mass media texts that shaped mass culture. Mass media obscured the realities of life in class society and at best made conformity tolerable.

Adorno and Horkheimer drew attention to the fact that the capitalist industrial workplace produced not just goods but also cultures. When they dubbed this sector of industrial production "the culture industry," they revealed the economic and social lines connecting industries that were then understood to be separate (e.g., film and television) with manufacturing industries and practices. Their point was that by ideologically promulgating a desire for middle-class lifestyles and goods among the mass working populace, the mass media reproduced capitalism's class system. Just as advertisements sold products, narrative cinema sold the lifestyle and class system of capitalist modernity. Some films, such as William Wyler's *The Best Years of Our Lives*, released right after World War II, romanticized working-class and middle-class laborers and soldiers, making their lives seem honorable, noble, and iconic. Other films, such as King Vidor's *Gilda* (a 1946 *film noir*), generated fascination with decadent lifestyles and the questionable values of the new global industrial venture capitalists engaged in shady cartels. Television serials represented middle-class life as a normative standard, combining its fictional stories with product promotion spots that stitched desire for specific branded goods into fantasies about living the lives portrayed in postwar situation comedies.

In these ways, cinema and television manufactured desire not only for lifestyles, but also for things—not just any goods, but the brand-name goods displayed and advertised in the shows or worn and used by the stars and discussed

FIG. 6.3

1947 ad for Max Factor Hollywood patented Pan-Cake Make-Up



in new popular magazines. For instance, in the late 1940s the Hollywood makeup manufacturer Max Factor developed cosmetics using compounds that would hold up under the hot lights of the film set and which would render skin in nonreflective, matte surfaces, allowing more control over the ways in which skin tone appeared on the new panchromatic color film stock. Vibrant color images of female stars in different shades of lipstick connoting different gender stereotypes inspired women and teenage girls who saw these films. The idea that a woman should appear in public wearing makeup modeled on her favorite stars was promulgated by the print media industry, with stories in the popular magazine *Photoplay* advising readers to let “Hollywood experts” be their guides to the tricks of makeup and dress. Stars were quoted giving beauty and makeup tips, and a special section of the magazine was devoted to “Hollywood Face Facts,” with editors dispensing technical and product advice on how to alter one’s face with makeup to look more like one’s favorite star.

By the 1960s, the standardized balancing of film stock to provide the greatest tonal range in the photographing of white skin tones led to changes in film stocks and screen aesthetics. The standard tone of makeup and of film stock had been historically white, as an unmarked norm. By the 1970s, the Kodak “Shirley” cards used for skin tone calibration, named after their original white Brunette model, became multiracial.

By the late 1950s, some were concerned about Adorno and Horkheimer’s pejorative disdain of the



FIG. 6.4

Multiracial “Shirley” card, 1996, distributed by Eastman Kodak for calibrating skin tone on prints

worker and their agency and intellect. In 1957, British literary scholar Richard Hoggart challenged the dichotomy between (low) mass culture and elite literature.⁶ In 1964, Hoggart founded Birmingham University's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, out of which was produced some of the most important scholarship in visual cultural studies and popular media studies. In *The Popular Arts* (1964), Birmingham scholar Stuart Hall and his co-author, Paddy Whannel, proposed: "The struggle between what is good and worthwhile and what is shoddy and debased is not a struggle *against* the modern forms of communication, but a conflict *within* these media."⁷ Hall and Whannel's book jacket combines a radio, a television console, and celluloid film reels in a composition that makes a human face, which suggests "the mass media" (a term used in the book's subtitle) is a unified object that should not be critically opposed from without but understood critically in its human dimensions from within. Whannel had been employed by the British Film Institute to travel around England educating the populace about television and mainstream film, including Hollywood films, as objects no less worthy of study than "serious" literature.⁸ A British tradition of cultural studies arose around the Birmingham School, with some of its hallmarks this refusal to write off popular or mass culture as debased forms reflecting dominant interests and an insistence on noting forms of practice, such as punk music, that emerged out of youth subcultures or community-based practice.

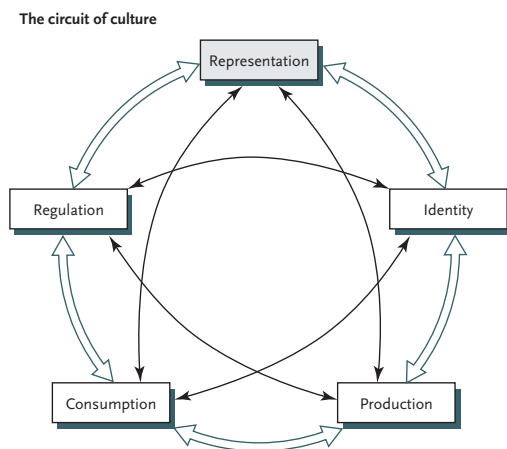
American media scholar John Fiske argued that in reading and watching mainstream media products, everyday people express interpretive agency, defying the social order embedded in the texts' dominant meanings. Popular culture is pro-

duced not solely by industry producers, but also by readers and consumers.⁹ The "American" versions of popular media studies and cultural studies, which was typified by Fiske, was subject to critique by a range of writers who decried the over-attention to individual pleasure and alternative expression and the failure to acknowledge the vast scope of economic

and cultural authority exercised by the American media industry, which had achieved global reach. Other authors, such as Angela McRobbie and Dick Hebdige, combined Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony (discussed in Chapter 2) with Barthes's semiotics (discussed in Chapter 1) to stress that agency comes from below in subcultures defying mainstream culture industries. People use techniques such as bricolage and pastiche to forge alternative styles and modes of expression.¹⁰ These scholars emphasized the cultural practices of media viewers,

FIG. 6.5

The Circuit of Culture, from Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon, eds., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*



users, and consumers rather than simply interpreting the cultural text itself. Hall and others described a “circuit of culture” in which meaning is produced and circulated through intersecting modes of production, consumption, regulation, representation, and identity.¹¹

Thus, since the late 1960s, cultural theorists have questioned the high art/mass culture divide, suggesting that our experiences with media are too complex and varied to be adequately characterized in sweeping categories such as mass consciousness or mass culture. Today, digital media takes this further, since the fragmenting of audiences and viewing practices means that there is no longer one mass audience. Rather, the populace is fragmented among a range of cultures and communities,

some of which use art and media to challenge or even transform the dominant meanings generated by the mainstream culture industry. Moreover, the culture industry no longer makes a unified set of products. It increasingly produces a diverse range of popular culture and media designed to appeal to niche audiences. Hence, the media can include counterhegemonic forces that challenge dominant ideologies and the social orders they uphold. Yet one glance at global popular culture shows that the critique of mass culture still has relevance—the repetition of formats, genres, narratives, ideologies, formulas, and conventions demonstrates a remarkable global standardization of culture.

Amusingly, Adorno has become a cultish figure for the popular NeinQuarterly Twitter feed, created by Eric Jarosinski, through which one can order a tote bag adorned with Adorno’s picture.¹² The joke is that this kind of star-emblazoned tote bag would be disdained by Adorno, yet in its ironic joke about the critic as commoditized star, it embraces his skepticism about and rejection of the commercialization and homogenization of popular culture.

Models for thinking about the influence of media and popular culture on social behavior have also come from philosophy and art. Take, for example, the work of Guy Debord, who was initially associated with Lettrism, a 1940s French artistic movement. With the Lettrists, Debord introduced psychogeography, a hybrid approach that emphasizes the impact of geography on human feelings and actions.¹³ Debord and his colleagues made counter-maps of the city that challenged the centralized, institutional logic of urban development introduced by Le



FIG. 6.6

@NeinQuarterly Theodor Adorno
Twitter avatar



FIG. 6.7

Psychogeographic hubs in a plan of Paris that reconfigures the standard planimetric map, from Guy Debord and Asger Jorn, *The Naked City*, 1957 (lithograph, 33.3 × 48.5 cm)

Corbusier and the other planners of postwar Paris.¹⁴ This Situationist map is compared to a map of the 16th arrondissement drawn by Paul-Henri Chombart de Lauwe, who traced the route taken by a student over the course of a year between her home, the School of Political Sciences, and her piano teacher's residence. By contrast, this image presents us with a messy clot without any of the navigable elements found in the Naked City

psychogeography map.

In 1957, Debord and others founded Situationist International, a group of artists, intellectuals, and political theorists who studied the experience of life in media-intensive, mid-century capitalism. The Situationists blurred the distinction between art and life, calling for a constant transformation of lived experience through staged

and spontaneous actions. The term *spectacle* refers to an event or image that is particularly striking in its visual display to the point of inspiring awe. We commonly think of spectacle as involving enormous scale—fireworks displays, awe-inspiringly large

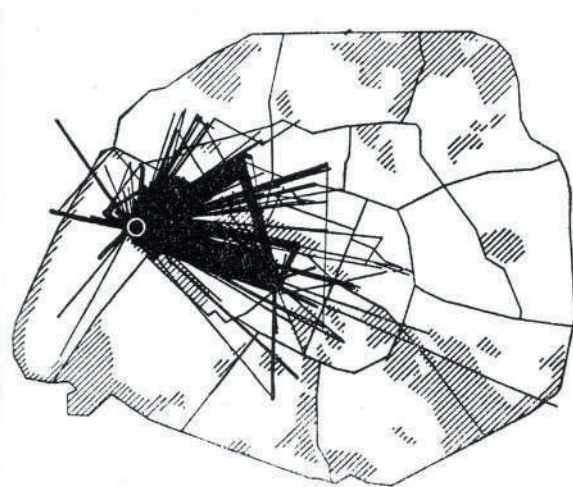


FIG. 6.8

Map of the 16th arrondissement of Paris tracing the routes taken by a student over a year, from Paul-Henri Chombart de Lauwe, *Paris et l'agglomération parisienne*, Vol. 1, Presses universitaires de France, 1952, 106

images, IMAX movie screens, or devastating bombs. Debord and the Situationists were primarily interested in spectacle as a metaphor for society itself, emphasizing that we live amidst orchestrated spectacles. Debord describes spectacle as both an “instrument of unification” and a world vision that forges social relationships. All that was once directly lived, he argued, has become mere representation. His point was not only that images dominate, but that everyday life experiences are now dominated by the logic of the spectacle.¹⁵

The Situationists have since become a symbol of resistance to the society of the spectacle. Spectacles are technologies through which we look and which alter our vision. Although Debord and the Situationists were rooted in 1960s social movements, their ideas about the world as spectacle are increasingly relevant to understand the contemporary global city, which serves as an iconic reminder of the successes of global capital in places where previously capitalism was anathema.

We can see the importance of spectacle in this frame from Maxim Pozdorovkin and Joe Bender’s *Capital* (2010), a film tracking the construction of Astana, a utopian capital city of the future built to embody the new vision of Kazakhstan, a vast, oil-rich Central Asian nation-state that has undergone dramatic transformation since it became independent from the Soviet Union in 1991.

We can also see the influence of Situationist International in the work of The Yes Men (Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno), a political performance art ensemble. Bichlbaum and Bonanno impersonate corporate leaders and create online representations of fictional corporations, attending business conferences and meetings around the world to make “culture jamming” interventions. In their 2014 film *The Yes Men Are Revolting*, Bichlbaum and Bonanno take on climate change by staging a fake corporate presentation at a fossil fuels industry event. At the Homeland Security Congress, they pretend to be U.S. Department of Energy representatives promoting a renewable energy initiative that would be owned by Native American tribes. Before being discovered, they get policymakers and defense contractors to perform a fake Native American ritual for



FIG. 6.9

Screen shot from the film *Capital*, dir. Maxim Pozdorovkin and Joe Bender, 2010

FIG. 6.10

Screen shot from the video *The Yes Men Are Revolting*, dir. Andy Bichlbaum, Mike Bonanno, and Laura Nix, 2014



renewable energy, an action that has a visibly moving effect on many participants. In their combination of serious political critique, masquerade, and pranksterism, The Yes Men follow the Situationist precedent in disrupting the normative psychogeographies of everyday life. They parody, reroute, and disrupt the usual practices of both the corporate world and the media industry it relies upon to promote itself. In the film, we see media personnel getting spoon-fed information through press releases and events that they do not question. The Yes Men events generate external media coverage as soon as their “fake” presentations are discovered. In this strategy of exploiting mass media attention, The Yes Men adeptly call attention to corporate malfeasance, revealing as critical guerrilla humor what previously passed for corporate ingenuity.

As this example shows, critiques of mass culture have continued to expand and change since the Frankfurt School, the Situationists, and early cultural studies. In the 1990s, amidst discussions about media globalization, anthropologists including South Asian postcolonial theorist Arjun Appadurai and Argentinian scholar Néstor García Canclini emphasized the unevenness and hybridity (mixedness) of Western cultural imperialism. In his 1996 book *Modernity at Large*, Appadurai takes issue with the notion that the media are the opium of the masses, reminding readers that the consumption of media throughout the world has often provoked irony, anger, and resistance, not merely compliance or acquiescence. Engagement with Western media has in fact entailed agency to a degree unacknowledged in media effects and media imperialism communication theories.¹⁶ In his 1995 book *Hybrid Cultures*, Canclini proposes that we should observe how people in Latin American nations engage with Western media and cultural processes in ways that are complexly mixed and not simply reproductions of the pro-

FIG. 6.11

“Tribute to Joan Miró,” a Zapotec rug by Delfina Ruiz, Mexico, inspired by Miró’s *Characters and Dog in the Sun*, for sale on NOVICA global marketplace in 2016



cesses and structures of the dominant industry and its economy. He considers how artistic and cultural forms are deterritorialized, unmoored from their original national and cultural contexts, and how style and meaning change in different contexts. He describes as “impure,” mixed, and hybrid the forms of expression that emerge when Western culture is appropriated, as in the example of artisans in rural Mexico interpreting classic European artworks in craft techniques—a Joan Miró painting rendered in a tapestry, for example.¹⁷

Media Infrastructures

Situationist interventions show how the flows and patterns of human usage can disrupt official networks and systems in the built environment. De Certeau also reminds us that humans who walk in the city may

disrupt the unity and clarity of state-sponsored urban design, which appears simple only when viewed from a god's-eye vantage point. When we make do with the world around us, we also make over that world.

The networks and systems that support media transmission are similarly structured in relationship to power. We should ask not just what sorts of messages get transmitted through media systems, but also what logic, priorities, and ideologies are built into media networks. Here our emphasis shifts from theories about the media industry's social and economic structures to those that analyze its technological infrastructure. That technological infrastructure is of course always also social and economic. By looking at infrastructure, we can understand better the dynamics of media systems and the messages they circulate.

As television spread in the postwar era, it became a national broadcast medium, with local programming in some countries. Initially, long-distance national transmission was facilitated through "terrestrial television," in which radio waves transmitted from a television station could be received through antennae. This type of broadcast, over-the-air (OTA) television, was first tested in the United States and Great Britain in the 1920s. Community antenna television (CATV) was used as early as 1938 in England and 1948 in the United States, where it was more common in regions where a single mountaintop antenna could serve entire towns via cable. By the 1950s, TV signals could reach almost every region in the United States, and AT&T had laid coaxial cable throughout the nation. In the early years, television programming was sometimes limited to regional or local audiences due to transmission limitations. By the 1960s, transmission was more reliable and more unified, with programming from the three centralized commercial stations broadcast around the country. Advertising revenues provided profits for the three major television production networks and their regional affiliates. In Britain, television has operated since 1938, when the wireless equipment manufacturers that had formed the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) around radio in 1922 first began to broadcast. By 1955, 80 percent of the nation had television, and the country saw the controversial introduction of commercial stations, which were called "independent," using the acronym ITV.

Satellite transmission was introduced in the 1960s to facilitate long-distance broadcasting, making possible the transmission of live news and events overseas. In many regions, including Africa, satellite has been used more widely than it has in Europe and the United States because of the difficulties of laying cable to reach remote areas with small populations. Satellite remains South Africa's dominant transmission form. The model of broadcasting locally was challenged by the laying of national and undersea cable systems and by satellite transmission. With the expansion of broadcast range and accompanying increase in potential markets, the major U.S. networks produced programs that appealed to more universal or "mass" cultural interests, phasing out the earlier community-based and regional programming models.

Industry deregulation starting in the late 1970s spurred a market for cable programming in North America, East Asia, Australia, Europe, the Middle East, and South America. Twenty years after the phase-out of the "local" programming

model, the emergent cable programming industry introduced a “narrowcasting” model. This consisted of identifying small niche groups not fully served by or satisfied with mass programming. Following market research, cable producers designed special pay-channels and pay-programming to appeal to viewers who did not fit the tastes or language profiles of the proverbial “masses.” Chinese-, Korean-, Hindi-, and Spanish-language channels were introduced to cater to diasporic communities throughout the world, and programming from networks such as CNN, the BBC, and TV5 from France, among others, was distributed globally via cable systems. The United States saw the introduction of “minority” networks such as Black Entertainment Television (BET) and Lifetime (Television for Women). Telemundo and Univision were introduced to serve Spanish-language audiences globally. The proliferation of stations and programming options escalated into the 2000s, giving the appearance that television had become a realm of expanded entertainment choices, catering to highly specific viewer styles, languages, subjects, and tastes in a scope that is paradoxically global. This appearance of expanded options reflected the ideology that the individual must be served by the media industry in ways that acknowledge the unique specificity of individual groups. Critics of the cable phenomenon such as John McMurria emphasize that cable’s apparent expansion of choice did not create diversity but rather perpetuated existing television industry problems such as lack of diversity in management and hiring and the proliferation of programming deploying racial, ethnic, and gender stereotypes.¹⁸

Scholars have linked this “individual choice” mentality to the rise of neoliberalism, a term describing the resurgence, since the 1960s, of laissez-faire economic liberalism, industry privatization, and diminishment of government regulation. Neoliberal policies also incentivize free trade and private-sector investment and eliminate barriers around global investment and competition. Media deregulation allowed for unprecedented consolidation of media ownership, which means that in the United States, most media companies are now owned by a few massive global corporate conglomerates, such as Viacom, Comcast, Sony, Twenty-First Century Fox, Disney, British Sky Broadcasting, and Time Warner.

The development of the Internet in the 1960s and 1970s, with the subsequent expansion of the home computer market and the development of the web in the early 1990s, dramatically changed the media landscape and its infrastructure. The introduction in the 2000s of social media reflected the neoliberal model of choice that had been used to justify deregulation and privatization in media and health care markets. The Internet, which began as a text-based communication medium, became more visual with advances in digital technologies throughout the 1980s and 1990s. With the expansion of broadband, the Internet became a platform for video, television, and film viewing by the early 2010s. The Internet is a network that allows for multiple modalities of communication and circulation, effectively building out from the modalities of television, telephony, radio, and film, as well as the mail and library systems, to serve a plethora of cultural transmission forms

on a single network. This model, in which multiple transmissions and exchanges are supported by packet switching (allowing multiple exchanges to occur simultaneously), presented a radical switch from former models such as the telephone, in which the user could receive only one transmission at a given time, or television, in which only one show could appear on a given screen at any given time. The Internet began in the 1960s with ARPANET, a military project designed to create a complex and flexible network that would enable communications to be re-routed in the case of attack, emergency, or breakdown of any information chain in the network.

The infrastructures of our primary media systems today, which undergird the systems of broadcast television, cable television, the Internet, and mobile phones, are a combination of wireless systems, satellite communication systems (which send signals to satellites orbiting the Earth that then send them back to Earth), and networks of cables, most of them under the sea. As Nicole Starosielski writes, “with each wave of technological development, the media landscape appears less wired,” yet this experience of wirelessness is “grounded by a large mass of cable systems.” These wires are “buried under soil and pavement, snaking along the bottom of the ocean, enclosed in industrial parks and office buildings, secluded in rural areas.” They are the infrastructure of the “wireless” culture through which almost all Internet traffic travels.¹⁹ How information and messages travel through these networks affects their speed. Of course, in moments of disruption and catastrophe when networks go down (or satellites fail), the infrastructures of these systems reveal themselves, emerging from their otherwise invisible state of existence underwater, underground, and up in the sky.

Satellite technology has been a key infrastructure for media and communication industries over the last fifty years, with thousands of satellites launched for military applications (spying from the skies), weather observation, scientific applications, security apparatuses, and media and entertainment practices. Satellite is crucial to the expansion of television networks in ways that were initially largely invisible. Cable networks distribute programming via satellite to localized cable systems, which began with HBO in 1975, followed by many other cable networks. Thus, the role of satellite technology in distributing “cable” television was made largely invisible to the public through its very naming, yet in the contemporary media landscape, with direct satellite television and radio, satellites are fully a part of consumers’ media imaginary. As Lisa Parks and James Schwoch note, satellites “have been fundamental to contemporary conceptualizations of the global and to processes of globalization. Satellites circulate signals across and beyond the sovereign boundaries of nations on earth and in doing so facilitate the flows of a global economy.”²⁰ Satellite technology has become commonplace for communication technologies, to the extent that we barely register when we are deploying satellites in our everyday lives—for instance, when a telephone call to someone down the street is routed through a satellite orbiting the Earth.



FIG. 6.12

Trevor Paglen, *KEYHOLE-IMPROVED CRYSTAL from Glacier Point* (Optical Reconnaissance Satellite; USA 224), 2011 (chromogenic print)

objects and debris. Paglen makes visible the invisible strategies through which surveillance operates. The project uses observational data produced by an international network of “amateur satellite observers” to calculate the position and timing of satellites, which are then photographed. In this image from the series, Paglen juxtaposes the normally invisible activity of satellites in the sky with the famous landscape of Yosemite as seen from Glacier Point.

FIG. 6.13

(a) Antenna tree, Calabria, Italy;
(b) Antenna cactus installation by Larson Camouflage, Tucson, Arizona



(a)



(b)

These invisible infrastructures are designed to not be seen. Lisa Parks has written about the invisible field of the satellite gaze, pointing out the masked presence of cell towers in structures that are designed to look like trees. Driving past such structures, we might imagine ourselves to be in nature when we are in fact surrounded by camouflaged architecture supporting the ever-present network of information flows. Parks writes that “by disguising infrastructure as part of the natural environment, concealment strategies keep citizens naive and uninformed about the network technologies they subsidize and use each day.”²¹

An infrastructural analysis also allows us to see how the concept of the cloud masks the vast array of machines necessary to create the illusion of a virtual, wireless world. Private companies like Google, Amazon, and Facebook have invested billions in creating server farms, which hold the vast amounts of

memory and data storage needed to sustain social media, media streaming, and information technology.²² The cloud is a convenient metaphor which conjures images of wispy bits of white floating in the sky and which gives the veneer of environmental friendliness to the tech industry and consumer technology practices. The reality is, however, that these storage farms consume and waste vast amounts of energy. Many of them are built near hydroelectric power sources because they are so energy consuming. For security reasons, many of these storage facilities are hidden in anonymous buildings. Tung-Hui Hu notes that despite how it masks these large data centers,

the cloud, “as an idea, has exceeded its technological platform and become a potential metaphor for the way contemporary society organizes and understands itself.”²³ This disconnect between media infrastructure metaphors and their material realities reveals a fundamental myth of the tech industries as immaterial in their relationship to the environment.

The media infrastructures, industries, and technologies that we are discussing here reveal how communication technology models have shifted from mass media to what Manuel Castells has referred to as the “network society”—information, messages, and finances circulate through networks rather than through systems of broadcast and one-way communication.²⁴ The complex ways in which contemporary media are structured allows both for the effectively unregulated consolidation of media power and for an increase in consumer-user productions and communications. There are now, as we noted, vast corporate conglomerates that own network and cable television, film studios, radio, web media, and newspapers, and huge corporate entities such as Google (which owns YouTube) and Facebook (which owns Instagram) that have enormous power over media messages and the structures through which they are circulated and shaped. Media scholar and activist Robert McChesney has chronicled the changes in Federal Communications Commission (FCC) policies throughout the 1990s and 2000s that have limited government regulation of media ownership, facilitating private-sector mergers and monopoly conglomerates that span telecommunications, television, print journalism, the film industry, the web, entertainment and amusement venues, and a surprisingly diverse range of other sorts of industries (food, oil, clothing, toys).²⁵ Yet these same media forms have also enabled consumer-user production, home entertainment, web media, and social media, which in turn have restructured viewing practices, audiences, and the forms through which viewers consume and make media themselves.



FIG. 6.14

Backup generators at the Facebook data center in Prineville, Oregon

Media as Nation and Public Sphere

Media can both affirm nationalism and critique it. By airing an issue or event internationally, broadcasters signal its global importance and offer a means of connecting affected communities across vast distances. In his highly influential 1983 book on nationalism, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson writes that the modern nation-state is an imagined political community—imagined as both limited (with borders) and sovereign (self-governing). Anderson famously notes that the nation is “*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”²⁶ Anderson argues that national newspapers, among other factors, led to these feelings of community. Although Anderson did not discuss television, one can certainly argue that television has been a central medium in the creation of national identity, in particular in times of crisis. Thus some critics have noted that Anderson’s concept of “print capitalism” should be extended to include “electronic capitalism.”²⁷ Because of its capacity for instant transmission, its public presence, and its situation within the domestic sphere, television has played a primary role (as radio did before it) in fostering a sense of national identity and a collective public sphere. For instance, as Arvind Rajagopal has written, Hindu nationalism in India was fostered by the enormously popular television series *Ramayan*, a Hindu epic, shown on state-run television from 1987 to 1990. The Hindu epic, a nostalgic view of a Hindu past, was effectively deployed via television to mobilize religious nationalism.²⁸

In many postwar cultures, television was viewed in public places before it had fully saturated the home television markets. In Japan most television viewing took place in large outdoor plazas before the late 1950s, when more Japanese households acquired television sets. Shunya Yoshimi writes that professional wrestling was a popular genre of these outdoor broadcasts, which sometimes drew thousands of viewers.²⁹ Later, restaurants began to capitalize on the popularity of public viewing by installing television sets. In Great Britain, prior to the television era national sentiment was rallied through mobile movie trailers that brought newsreels out of the theaters and into the public square, where citizens could bond in a more public and interactive manner than the darkened private theater allowed. During the Arab Spring of 2011, when massive crowds gathered in Tahrir Square in Cairo to protest the Egyptian government, large screens showed films outdoors to the crowds. Organized by local artists and media activists, this became known as Cinema Tahrir. Collective public viewing can thus interpellate viewers as part of a national audience or a political movement. When Anderson wrote of the imagined national community, he stressed the importance of simultaneity, of the sense of experiencing events together at the same time. The fact that television can be transmitted instantaneously across great distances helps to create this sense of national or global community connectedness, and the screening of films outdoors in public

creates shared experiences of public space. The public space created by these media is virtual as well as physical.

Thus, contemporary media forms are a primary means through which concepts are created not only of a nation but also a public. The media contributes to several interconnected publics: national publics, global publics, and networked publics. The concept of a public and the differences between public and private have been subject to debate since the early twentieth century. Michael Warner has written that a “public” can be defined as a space of discourse, which involves a relation among strangers, in which public speech is both personal and impersonal. A public is a social space constituted through the “reflexive circulation of discourse,” that is, the circulation and exchange of ideas.³⁰ Warner notes that the Internet has sped up this circulation of ideas. That is, the circulation of ideas in more traditional media such as newspapers and television took place at daily and weekly intervals, whereas now it takes place within the instant temporality of the web.³¹

The notion of a public has been deeply allied with the concept of a public sphere, which is defined ideally as a space—a physical place, social setting, or media arena—in which citizens come together to debate and discuss the pressing issues of their society. In the 1920s, social commentator Walter Lippmann postulated that the public sphere was nothing more than a “phantom”—that it was not possible for average citizens to keep abreast of political issues and events and give them due consideration given the chaotic pace of industrial society. Definitions of the public sphere have been enormously influenced by the ideas of German theorist Jürgen Habermas, who postulates that modern bourgeois society has within it the potential for an ideal public sphere. Habermas sees the public sphere as a group of “private” persons who can assemble to discuss matters of common “public” interest in ways that mediate state power. With the rise of newspapers, salons, coffeehouses, book clubs, and private social contexts in which public debate could take place, the liberal European and American middle class of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gained the potential for a public sphere. Habermas surmises that this public sphere has always been compromised by other forces, including the rise of consumer culture, the rise of the mass media, and the intervention of the state in the private sphere of the family and home.³² In ideal terms, the public sphere is emblematic of participatory democracy, a space in which citizens can debate public issues regardless of their social status and in which rational discussion can spur positive social change. In addition, Habermas believes that the public sphere is a public space in which private interests (such as business interests) are inadmissible, hence a place in which true public opinion can be formulated.

Habermas’s theory of the public sphere has been repeatedly challenged. The nineteenth-century public sphere he described was only available to white bourgeois men, and scholars have pointed out that the exclusion of women, people of color, noncitizens, and working-class people is what makes possible this way of conceiving the public. In other words, these scholars show how the idea of a

unified public sphere is not only a fallacy but is also based on exclusion (hence, not truly public). Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge argue that the public sphere imagined by Habermas needs to be reconceived as a working-class (“proletarian”) public sphere and that the model of the nineteenth-century European bourgeois public sphere had been too easily transformed into fascism, as it was in Germany in the 1930s. Negt and Kluge also update the public sphere to include media, both media industries and alternative media, as a counterpublic.³³

The public sphere model is based on the idea that there are distinctly separate public and private spheres and that the state is separate from private market interests. This distinction between public and private has long been challenged, since the political terrain of all modern societies involves, to varying degrees, elements of private interest. Furthermore, the notion of a separation of public and private spheres is based on gender, race, and class ideologies that must be rethought. The traditional division between public and private depends on the belief that women should be relegated to the domestic sphere of the home and men to the public arenas of business, commerce, and politics.

Many scholars have proposed that we think in terms of multiple public spheres and counterspheres, rather than one. Political theorist Nancy Fraser has pointed out that historically women were relegated to the private domestic sphere of the home and elided from the public spaces and discourses of middle- and upper-class European and white men. She defines a women’s or a feminist countersphere, among other counterspheres of public discourse and agency.³⁴ A counterpublic understands itself to be subordinate in some way to the dominant public sphere but is still a site from which people can speak up in society. Theorists such as Fraser suggest that we can envision many publics that overlap and work in tension with each other: working-class publics, religious publics, feminist publics, and so forth. Along these lines, feminist media critics such as Lynn Spigel have critiqued the distinction of public and private as it negates women’s labor in the domestic sphere as well as the integration of media and domestic space.³⁵ Michael Warner notes that the sexual cultures of gay men and lesbians can be seen as a counterpublic in that they are spaces of discussion, debate, and the circulation of ideas that are structured by alternative dispositions and protocols, “making different assumptions about what can be said or what goes without saying.”³⁶

The idea of the counterpublic, or of various publics, has moved beyond the model of a physical site like a café or meeting hall to online contexts. Even when their interactions involve face-to-face interaction, most publics communicate in mediated ways, and these remote forms of contact are as intensely personal and emotional as in-person exchanges. Online communities like Reddit operate as discussion forums, and even though they may have millions of members, they are sites that construct publics and counterpublics. Contemporary technology researchers such as Yochai Benkler call these networked publics and use contemporary visualization techniques to chart the trajectory of public debate.³⁷ Do social media

interactions constitute kinds of public spheres and counterpublics? The corporate ownership of such forums, and their integration of advertising, demonstrates a radically different world of civic discourse.

Democracy and Citizen Journalism

Can the media serve social justice political movements? While many have raised concerns about media ownership consolidation and the homogeneity of media coverage, we may also consider whether the media may be a venue for democratic ideals. Communications technologies may be used as empowering tools that promote an open flow of information and exchange of ideas. This view affirms the potential for media forms to be used by individuals and groups to resist dominant structures or offer countercultural perspectives. Marshall McLuhan, who wrote most influentially in the 1950s through the 1970s, was a proponent of this view. McLuhan argued that television and radio were like natural resources, waiting to be used to increase humanity's collective and individual experiences of the world. He argued that the media are simply extensions of our natural senses, helping us better to hear, see, and know the world and, moreover, helping us to connect ourselves to geographically distant communities and bodies. His analysis in the 1960s and 1970s of how the speed of information's flow through the media has affected local, national, and global cultures was tremendously influential and is affirmed by the mediascape today.

Many of McLuhan's ideas are now being recycled in the digital media age. In fact, he is the "patron saint" of *Wired Magazine*, which was established in 1993 to cover computer technologies and web culture. *Wired* embodies techno-utopianism, and McLuhan's catchy aphorisms, such as his concept of the media creating a "global village," have resonated powerfully with the idea that digital technologies and the Internet have created new forms of community. In 1965 McLuhan stated, "there are no remote places. Under instant circuitry, nothing is remote in time or in space. It's now."³⁸ His words now seem prescient of the most optimistic views about media globalization. Yet, although McLuhan's notion of the global village resonates in profound ways with contemporary digital media culture, it cannot help us to understand the ways in which globalization has created new kinds of inequalities between those who are plugged in and those who are not.

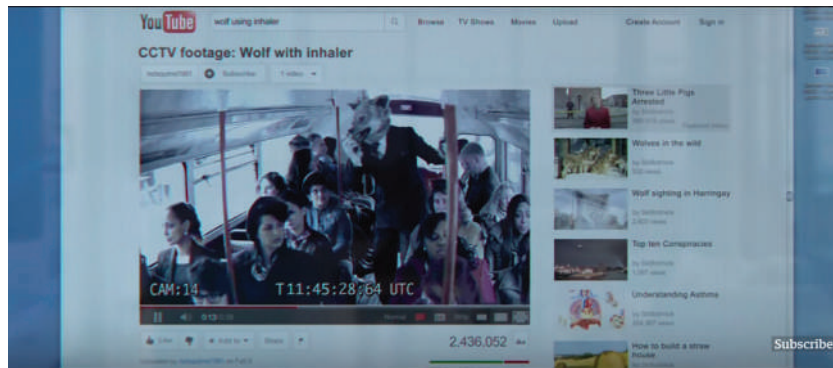
In the contemporary media environment, with the rise of social media, definitions of media and audiences have dramatically changed. We can see elements of both the liberatory and damaging qualities of media globalization. On the positive side, the dominance of mainstream media has been challenged by the rise of citizen journalism and web-based media produced by citizen-users. As we discussed in Chapter 1, citizen journalism can be defined as the process by which ordinary citizens participate in the dissemination and production of news. Journalism scholar Jay Rosen writes that citizen journalism is "when the people formerly known as

the audience deploy the press tools they have in their possession to inform one another.”³⁹ The challenge of citizen journalism to the traditional journalistic construct of experts is significant. This phenomenon is emerging in a context in which the journalism profession, along with its ability to maintain ethical standards, has been gutted through the media industry’s turn to freelance and free labor. This trend has crushed many publications and shrunk criticism and genres of practice such as careful, intensive investigative story research, which requires paid work time without the pressure of fast turnaround placed on freelance workers, who are paid by the story. Readers/consumers increasingly turn to the web for news but find fewer resources for vetting the accuracy and reliability of news stories churned out by freelance contributors and “fake news” outlets, and supplemented by crowdsourced commentary. At the same time, in the contemporary context of volatile global politics, journalism poses the risk of political retribution, as in the many cases of journalists assassinated for their political views. Consider the case of Naji Jerf, the Syrian editor-in-chief of the monthly *Hentah*. Jerf was well-known for making documentaries describing violence and abuses in Islamic State-controlled territories. He was gunned down in broad daylight in Turkey in late 2015 while walking near a building housing Syrian media outlets. Citizen journalists reported his death, which was one of three journalist assassinations in Turkey in three months.⁴⁰

As print newspapers and television news lose readers and viewers, the web presence of news organizations has grown. The British news outlet the *Guardian* has created a global online presence on a scale that it could never have achieved when it was published in paper form only. In 2012, the *Guardian* ran an ad (which subsequently won many awards) that depicts the complex world of web media. The ad, which was created by the British agency Bartle Bogle Hegarty (BBH), plays with viewer-reader expectations by adapting a well-known fable, the Three Little Pigs. The ad asks viewers: Were the three little pigs so good, and was the wolf really so bad?

In the ad, a SWAT team arrests the pigs for having boiled the wolf. Then, via social media comments (which scroll across the screen), the story unfolds in surprising ways, with an amateur video that shows the wolf had asthma (which challenges the story that he blew the pigs’ houses down) and confessions that the pigs had committed insurance fraud to keep their houses that they were losing in the mortgage crisis. The story ends with protesters taking to the streets, proclaiming “the banks made the pigs do it.” The ad portrays the “whole picture” as one that includes not just journalistic investigation but also reader commentary, social media discussion and debate, citizen journalism, viewer engagement and analysis, and surprising conclusions.

Citizen journalism is one of the primary ways that the media’s democratic potential can be seen today around global media events in which people participate together in person and in real time and space even as they use social media. In the early 2010s, the Occupy Wall Street movement used the web, social media, and



mobile phones strategically to organize and to anticipate police action between sites, utilizing the skill of tech-savvy members such as media sociologist and activist Boston Joan (Joan Donovan). The capacity of media to enable political activism is particularly evident in user-produced images and videos of police violence, shootings, and street protests, which have dramatically changed journalism and raised public awareness of police brutality. The vast evidence of U.S. police violence against black subjects shared through Facebook, blogs, and news outlets throughout 2015 and 2016 demonstrates the power of the image to incite deep emotional responses, social movements, and public engagement.

FIG. 6.15a–c

Screen shots from video ad for the *Guardian*, by Bartle Bogle Hegarty (BBH), 2012



FIG. 6.16

Screen shot of bystander video taken by Feidin Santana showing police officer Michael Slager fatally shooting Walter Scott in North Charleston, South Carolina, on April 4, 2015, following a traffic stop for a broken brake light

The Black Lives Matter movement is a key example of this harnessing of social media's potential to protest and to engender change by deciding not only what to show but also what not to show. Black Lives Matter began as a movement in the context of protests against police violence and took on a social media life in 2013 as a Twitter hashtag (#BlackLivesMatter) when George Zimmerman was acquitted of murder in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, a high school student

who was unarmed and had gone out to get snacks at a local convenience store in Sanford, Florida. The Black Lives Matter movement expanded online as people began to use social media to share information and phone camera footage documenting police violence and killings of other young black men around the United States. There are parallels to be noted between the Emmett Till case discussed in Chapter 1 and the Martin case.

Fourteen-year-old Emmett Till was brutally murdered because he was accused of whistling at a white woman. Seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin was killed simply because he was walking down the street of a predominantly white neighborhood. Black Lives Matter as a movement is propelled in part by social media and the choices made by people in the circulation of images not only as evidence but, more important, as icons of injustice and expressions of the demand for rights and for justice. In many cases, decisions have been made not to show images of victims but to emphasize instead images expressing empowerment and rights. Protest entails taking control through the curation of images that circulate on social media beyond those provided by the press and the police. Movement participants thus define the discourse within a broad field of networks and in an expanded field of time and space as activists in different cities connect and report through image and text.

Picked up by the press as an instance of citizen journalism, a bystander video shot by Feidin Santana documents officer Michael Slager killing Walter Scott, an unarmed motorist, on April 4, 2015, in North Charleston, South Carolina. What it shows contradicts Thomas's police report. It was among the images that launched a public discussion about documentation and the credibility of police reporting of violent incidents. The production of images, which extends to the use of police dashcams and bodycams, has raised public awareness about violence that has long been practiced and hidden—in this case, the long history of U.S. police violence against black people. Nicholas Mirzoeff refers to these new visual productions and circulations as a form of visual activism. In Mirzoeff's terms, social movements such as Black Lives Matter are explicitly about the right to look, the right to defy

visuality in which looking is deployed by those with power as a means of repression. He notes that in U.S. prisons, inmates can be punished for looking at guards in a manner codified as “reckless eyeballing.”⁴¹

After police in Ferguson, Missouri, killed Michael Brown in August 2014, protests rolled out for weeks, with participants in each new event generating and posting more images on social media. Protestors began to hold signs stating “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot” and generating images of people protesting with their hands up, referencing the fact that Brown had had his hands up in the air at the moment he was shot. Images of protest circulated on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and other forums, ending up in mainstream media coverage as well. The phrase and pose became iconic of the movement as vast numbers of images from protests were uploaded to the web every minute. Mirzoeff states, “These new conditions are producing a new politics. Eighty-five percent of African Americans aged 18–29 have smartphones, several points higher than their white counterparts. The young, often queer, often female, black activist generation that has come into being since Ferguson relies on social media to make these protests, and the actions that cause them, visible in new ways.”⁴²

Visual culture practices, in tandem with social media and digital technologies, are thus transforming politics and public culture through decisions made by citizens every day about how to have image agency in a global media event. Citizens determine what to photograph and post and how best to express political agency through image and text without the direct filter of the media industry.



FIG. 6.17

Students gather at American University in solidarity with Ferguson, December 3, 2014

Global Media Events

The idea of a “global media event” emerged in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. It was largely based on a concept of television as a unifying force. Interestingly, one of the most iconic global moments in television was the turn of the millennium on New Year’s Eve of 1999 into the year 2000, when television coverage began with the dawn of the new millennium in the Pacific (at the International Date Line) and followed the beginning of the millennium through Asia, Africa, Europe, and North and South America. This was a reminder that the day of the world begins in the Pacific, which has enormous implications for financial markets that were certainly not envisioned by the nineteenth-century governments which thought that putting the international date line in the Pacific would

affirm the centrality of Greenwich, England, as the center of time. Sports events such as the World Cup and the Olympics are constructed as global media events, as are some royal weddings (British in particular) and funerals of important heads of state. Yet moments of crisis have constituted the most global news events. As Anderson notes in his book *Imagined Communities*, simultaneity is a key factor in the sense of participating in a nation and the media play a key role in this simultaneity and connectivity. Comparing two moments of crisis—the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, in which television coverage was a key factor, and the Parisian terrorist attacks in November 2015, in which social media was a key factor—reveals changing media forms, audiences, and messages in the global mediascape.

In the global media event of 9/11, four planes were simultaneously hijacked, one crashing into rural Pennsylvania, one crashing into the Pentagon in Virginia, and two crashing into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, which collapsed within two hours of the crash. Although little is publicly known about what the hijackers anticipated about news coverage, it is commonly speculated that they strategized the timing of the hijackings to produce the largest potential global audience for their acts. When the first plane hit the North Tower, only a few cameras caught an image of the crash, and these images were taken purely by chance. Jules Naudet, a French filmmaker shooting a documentary about New York City firefighters, happened to glance up with his camera as the plane flew over him and struck the tower.⁴³ When the South Tower was hit by a second plane more than fifteen minutes

later, there was an extraordinary number of people watching, not only from the street and rooftops of Lower Manhattan but also on screens and monitors receiving broadcasts of the live footage being recorded by the numerous television cameras that had been

brought in to cover the scene of the first crash. Film and television documentaries that incorporate street-level footage of the second plane approaching the tower typically include both the image and sound recorded at the scene. Accompanying the footage of the plane striking the second tower, we hear the horrified exclamations of the hundreds of people watching, along with the cameras, from below. Though the camera lenses were trained on the plane heading into the tower, the live sound allows us to picture the hundreds of spectators watching from the ground below, staring up in shock and disbelief. Television viewers watching the live broadcasts at a safe distance could watch with these witnesses, feeling their shock and fear through the medium of voice.

FIG. 6.18

Iconic image of World Trade Center towers being hit by second airplane, September 11, 2001



The attacks of 9/11 were a global media event of unprecedented proportions in which millions of viewers throughout the world saw images of the twin towers hit and falling, if not live, then within a very short period of time. It was also an event of immense spectacle—the image of the second tower exploding has been commonly referred to as the equivalent of a “movie,” due to the unreality of the spectacle. It is important to note that one of the primary aspects of spectacle is that it overshadows and erases the actual violence behind it—in this case, the spectacle of the explosion erases the people who were incinerated within it. The images of the twin towers exploding and falling were recorded by photographic, digital, and video cameras and disseminated via television, websites, newspapers, magazines, and email prior to the cell-phone camera era. Although the meaning of 9/11 has since been effectively nationalized, in the political rhetoric that followed, it was a media event that made clear the global reach of the media, with a primary role played by television. In an event such as this, we can see an array of intersecting media vectors through which information and images are simultaneously transmitted. The passengers on the hijacked planes and the people trapped in the World Trade Center used mobile phones and email to contact the police, family, and friends. Those connections created other connections via additional phone calls, emails, and text messages among relatives, friends, rescue workers, and the press. In the case of United Flight 93, it was through these communication vectors—specifically mobile phones—that passengers learned that several other planes had been hijacked and had crashed. This news apparently motivated passengers to attempt to take over the plane, leading it to crash in a field in rural Pennsylvania rather than its possible intended target in Washington, D.C. Over the hours that followed the hijackings, radio call-in shows were a forum for other vectors of exchange, and air travelers emailed loved ones that they were safe. The television images transmitted instantly around the world, with all the major networks live with footage by 8:52 a.m., minutes after the first plane struck, were rapidly disseminated into many different formats and viewing contexts. Ironically, as the towers fell, they took with them an enormous television antenna and various mobile phone transmitters, temporarily blocking television reception and cell phone connection to many New Yorkers. In the week that followed, U.S. television remained focused on the crisis, with regular programming and advertising suspended. Such a dramatic change in the media activity of everyday life signaled not only the depth of the national crisis but also the shock it had produced.⁴⁴

Thus, while 9/11 was a global media event in which many media forms were important vectors of information dissemination and exchange, it was primarily shaped by television. Viewers around the world were interpellated as a global audience, with the sense of watching together with the rest of the world. Here, we can see how Anderson’s concept of imagined communities can be applied to the experience of television in not only a national sense but also a global one. This global reach did not translate into a sense of cosmopolitanism and global comradeship, however, as the subsequent aftermath has seen increased global



FIG. 6.19

Twitter post about terrorist attacks in Paris, November 13, 2015

conflict, war, surveillance, and repression and the increasingly volatile dissolution of international alliances. The meaning of a highly mediated event such as 9/11 is inextricably tied to the images that were produced and that continue to circulate about it.

We can compare the media aspects of 9/11 to the those of the November 2015 terrorist attacks in France, in which 130 people were killed in a series of coordinated suicide bombings and mass shootings in Paris and the nearby suburb of Saint-Denis. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS, also known as ISIL and Daesh) claimed responsibility for the attacks. Comparing this event to 9/11, we can identify shifts in information flow and audience creation. Social media played a much greater role in the 2015 Paris attacks, which included shootings at several restaurants, a football stadium, and a concert hall (the latter being a site where the largest number of killings occurred).

As the attacks unfolded, information circulated quickly on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. These messages were almost immediately translated into mainstream news coverage, with news websites and television coverage quoting directly from Twitter and other social media posts in a manner that was tantamount to crowdsourced news reporting. Citizen journalism garnered considerable social authority as reporting came in from the sites of the attacks. Facebook inaugurated its disaster feature, Marked Safe, so that users who were near the attacks could post “safe” on their Facebook feeds, assuring relatives and friends that they were not in direct danger. Others in Paris used social media to offer refuge to those who were unable to reach their homes without risk.⁴⁵ The Twitter hashtag #PorteOuverte (open door) was, for instance, used to help people find shelter during the confusing hours when the attacks were still underway. People both in Paris and throughout the world heard about the terror attacks from social media, and many turned there first for their information and networking. This contrasts with 9/11, when people turned immediately to their televisions—in 2001, Facebook was still three years off, email was not nearly the pervasive medium it is today, and there were no mobile camera-phones. In the Paris event, social media posting was not only constant and pervasive throughout the unfolding of the attacks, it also dominated the news as messages, photographs, and videos were folded into television news stories and news sites. As happens increasingly with these events, images of solidarity began to circulate, with people spontaneously generating iconicity by posting and reposting images such as this composite of the Eiffel Tower inserted within a peace sign.

In January 2016, ISIS released a video that included footage of the attacks and images of some of the attackers carrying out beheadings in Syria prior to the attacks. The video was represented by news organizations as an explicit form of propaganda and recruitment aimed at young Muslims living in Europe. It is a complex montage of news coverage, images of targets and officials, and images of the attacks overlaid with techno-graphics (reminiscent of the Terminator's point of view from the films of the same name). ISIS has posted similar videos online to speak to and potentially recruit new members, in particular from the West. ISIS's deployment of visual and social media cultures distinguishes it from the tactics of previous insurgent and terrorist groups.



FIG. 6.20

Eiffel Tower peace sign on social media, November 2015

Such images raise crucial questions about what constitutes propaganda and whether images of violence, propaganda, and hate crimes should be censored. When in 2006 the French satirical periodical *Charlie Hebdo* published twelve caricatures of Muhammad, including one in which the prophet carries a bomb in his turban, the Grand Mosque of Paris brought criminal charges against the publication. The French Civil Court ruled that in fact the cartoon mocked fundamentalists generally and not the religious group Muslims specifically and was therefore not objectionable in legal terms. The cartoons, drawn by satirist Kurt Westergaard, had originally been published in the Danish daily newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*, spurring protests in Denmark against the media representation of Muslims. As news of the Danish media satire spread, protests against the cartoons and the Danish paper were held elsewhere in the world. But the publishers defended their choices by claiming the cartoons were expressions of journalistic free speech. The cartoons' republication in *Charlie Hebdo* and other presses around the world was in fact organized to show public global journalistic solidarity with the Danish paper, in defense of the global principles of journalistic free speech.

There were many actors in the global debate over the cartoons' publication, which can be seen within the author-as-producer framework that we discussed in Chapter 2. Following the original publication, the Danish prime minister described the controversy as the worst public relations incident Denmark had experienced since World War II, thus equating the publication with the nation itself. Those who defended the subsequent republication of the cartoons in the French periodical *Charlie Hebdo* point out that the magazine, which can



FIG. 6.21

People gather in Philadelphia to pay tribute to victims of the terrorist attack against the French satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo*, January 9, 2015

to take the power out of things deemed sacred (rendering, for instance, in the words of the editor, Islam as banal as Catholicism⁴⁶). Many stated that *Charlie Hebdo* should be allowed to publish these images as protected free speech. Critics of the *Charlie Hebdo* editors' decision hold that the images should be interpreted as hate speech. It is not only Kurt Westergaard and his expression of an idea that is at stake in this discussion, but the author-as-producer function of the *Jyllands-Posten* and *Charlie Hebdo* editors. The editors, in relationship with the artist and with state laws, were identified as culpable agents in both the national and the global debates about meaning and intention. Not only national politics and law matter in this debate—so too do religion, race, and the linking of appearances and images to behavior and morality: at stake are cartoon pictures drawn to demean a social group identified negatively based on looks.

When on January 7, 2015, gunmen entered the *Charlie Hebdo* offices and killed eleven staff members, mass protests broke out in France and internationally in support of the periodical—and yet many of those who protested the killings also critiqued the images because they are offensive to Muslims. These images clearly held dramatically different meanings powerful enough to incite protests. In the aftermath, many publications and protestors declared “Je Suis Charlie” (I am Charlie) as a form of solidarity on social media and on protest posters,

which then generated a global debate about what such a phrase might mean. The surviving *Charlie Hebdo* staff published a cover the following week with a cartoon image of Muhammad holding a “Je Suis Charlie” sign and the words “Tout est Pardonné (All is forgiven).”



FIG. 6.22

Anti-*Charlie Hebdo* protesters in Istanbul on January 25, 2015

As we see in the *Charlie Hebdo* case, public culture engagement with media is not always in the service of political unity or solidarity around a cause. We began this chapter with de Certeau's discussion of walking in the city, in which he emphasized the agency of people's everyday, quotidian experiences with social mediation from the standpoint of having their feet solidly on the ground, and we later introduced the psychogeographical interventions of the Situationists, who disrupted the normative flows and spatial logics of urban life by suggesting we may take different paths. In the examples of Occupy and Black Lives Matter, we see the potential of social media to facilitate and support agency and control of visual dynamics by resistance movements. In the new terrain of media coverage of global events, we have a complex interaction of individual agency and social media networking with broadcast and mass media venues.

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Brand Culture: The Images and Spaces of Consumption

We live in a world of brands. Product marks, logos, symbols, and messages permeate our cultures. The global shift toward free-market economies since the 1980s has shaped social media, making it a powerful locus of personalized marketing and advertising. Brands have become integral to personal identity and emotional life, in part through social media, with its porous boundaries between private and consumer online discourses. This tendency has been especially prevalent in nations in which market models dominated by individual initiative have been promoted as morally and ethically superior. Globally, the ideology of freedom has become monetized, becoming more closely aligned with the freedom to buy, sell, and consume. Concepts of the human subject and human culture are increasingly interpreted through an economic paradigm.

What are the characteristics of this paradigm? During the late twentieth century, cultural theorists Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno interpreted industrial production and consumption as aspects of an ideology that operates through symbols and representations, media texts and messages. A Fordist, assembly-line approach to production and commodity reproduction became dominant alongside a culture of mass consumption of mass-media texts. In their book *Global Culture Industry: The Mediation of Things*, Scott Lash and Celia Lury explain how commodity culture was transformed in the twenty-first century.¹ Lash and Lury propose that culture now operates through things, rather than through symbols and representations, texts and images. Things serve as media through which culture is transmitted, they propose, and media become things. Whereas previously markets were organized around the production and circulation of commodities, today brands—entities that acquire value through experience—serve this function.

In her book *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture*, Sarah Banet-Weiser proposes that brands operate as cultures. Moreover, we live in a brand culture, insofar as aspects of life such as religion, family, and self-identity are now “understood and expressed through the language of branding.”² When a brand operates as a culture, consumers participate in that culture as a way of life. The brand is not just the look and feel of a set of goods produced by a corporation; it is a broad cultural form through which identity and belief are experienced. Yet, Banet-Weiser explains, culture and self are not experienced as less authentic because they are structured through brand logic. Rather, “authenticity” is, in effect, branded.³

Consider Toms, a lifestyle brand launched in 2006 with the message that for each pair of shoes purchased the company will donate a pair of shoes to an impoverished child. In 2015 the company website stated that, with each purchase, Toms will “help give” not only shoes, but also “sight, water, safe birth, and bullying prevention services.” To wear Toms shoes or glasses, or to drink coffee at a Toms shop, is to participate in a humanitarian brand culture. That culture is experienced as personal and authentic, despite its mediation through consumption. A person expresses his or her identity through self-alignment with the brand and buying the brand’s goods. The brand is infused with (or, if we believe Toms’s story, born out of) a charity economics culture; that culture is, in return, branded, insofar as it operates through a commercial ethos.

This status of the brand as a culture that is both economic and emotional is found inside corporate structure as well, and not just in the culture of commodity circulation. Consider Boeing, a corporation known for producing airplanes that in 2009 described itself as being composed of three areas of practice: products and services, business practices, and community engagement. Since the late twentieth century, corporations including Boeing, Coca-Cola, and Nike increasingly have become involved in the communities in which their factories are located, sponsoring activities and programs that reach beyond the factory and its worker community. Community involvement has become part of the corporation’s “personality.” As we will discuss further, the linking of humanitarian activity and brands has escalated dramatically with the rise of the Internet and social media in the neoliberal era. Brands exert agency not just in the global business community but also in local communities, where they may hold the status of benefactor and lifestyle purveyor. Corporations sometimes champion fair trade sources or support environmental commitments in regions where plants are situated, even as they exercise questionable labor practices inside their plants. A corporate ethos of giving back to the world of workers and consumers has become a core aspect of corporate image design. Whereas in the twentieth century product branding involved developing packaging and the look and feel of goods, in the neoliberal era brand development includes the look and feel of the corporation as an agent in community life. Brand culture thus becomes integral to community. A brand, Banet-Weiser proposes, has become not just a style attached to commodities but also a relationship:

an “intersecting relationship between marketing, a product, and consumers.”⁴ The brand, once strongly associated with the representational mark (such as the trademark, or trade dress), is now a cultural framework for everyday living.

Banet-Weiser deploys the concept of “consumer citizenship” to describe the ways in which human subjects’ senses of national and community belonging increasingly are constructed through participation in brand cultures. The feeling of belonging in a brand culture is enhanced when a company invites us into a “participatory culture” through Facebook pages and Twitter, when we generate ratings on Yelp and Amazon, or when we click a pop-up advertisement. Companies respond to the information we have generated, gathering data from these sources, and changing their products and strategies in response. Brand success is thus contingent on consumer communication back to the producer, mediated within social media’s brand culture spaces. In this chapter we delve into brand culture and culture as brand to consider the role of visual practice and advertising.

But let us step back for a moment. Perhaps you are skeptical about the claim that one’s sense of authentic experience is informed by consumption and is, in effect, branded. We want to suggest that even if one does not identify with a brand culture or a brand lifestyle, there is a cultural tendency to interpret people through the brands they use, or don’t use. Even generic or no-name brand clothing is styled after the look and feel of brands. A lifestyle that lacks identifiable styles or labels can suggest different things, from not being able to afford name-brand items to a pointed stylistic avoidance of brand culture. There is a paradox here: living with brands can be expensive; for most people, coveted brands, or brands that engage in responsible labor practices, can be out of reach. Responsible labor practices cost more to support, and that cost is passed on to the consumer. Yet living without brands at all can be difficult and expensive as well. What is the cost of clothing that does not sport a branded design or label? Dressing in designer knockoff, recycled, upcycled, or thrift apparel might reflect the fact of being poor or having limited resources and limited choice. It might reflect a politics of refusal of mainstream brand culture, or an embrace of original, more authentic styles. Or it might reflect a mix of the above.

But thrifting or shopping generic labels does not preclude self-branding: to exercise good taste, or refuse dominant taste values, through consuming alternative labels or rejecting recognizable styles is to exhibit a refusal of brand culture that is still a form of self-branding. Even the food we buy and eat is branded, unless we grow our own food or seek local sources (which may be more time-consuming and expensive). Through social media platforms we engage in self-branding as well, insofar as these tools help us manage impressions and perform our selves. Moreover, the data we post are collected and used to target us with personalized marketing. Search a product, and you may find a message about it in your email within minutes. Mention a brand on Facebook, and news stories related to it will crop up in your feed. Pop-up ads generated by a careless click on a link or a random search word may haunt your screens for weeks or months.

To say that today we live in a world of brands may seem cynical and may, as Banet-Weiser notes, generate ambivalence toward the pervasiveness of advertising and brand culture. However, this is a reality that can be engaged responsibly and even critically. Rich countercultures exist at the margins of commercial brand culture. As we will discuss further, some of these countercultures spawned new business models (such as sharing economies) and alternative approaches to brand identity formation.

For instance, the many small-batch craft soda, beer, and coffee labels that fill grocery store shelves alongside major brands represent an alternative business model. This form follows a neoliberal market model about one's individual liberty and freedom to be a producer, even without corporate funding. Consumption of artisanal products allows the consumer to support small producers in a more personalized style of trade. An individual living in a city or town might smell beans roasting or being grinded while passing the local coffee shop, and might even drop in and chat with the owners, who challenge the stereotype of the corporate manufacturer as a distant, faceless entity. Perhaps the business owner has even personally met the distant community members who harvest the beans they acquire using fair trade practices, and tells us about these individuals on the packaging that is part of the product's trade dress. Perhaps this coffee consumer takes an eco-tourism trip to see the region where the coffee is harvested, participating in humanitarian activities in the community for a few days, sponsored by a tourism company or language school. Coffee crop workers are dependent on the global coffee trade for income. The coffee consumer knows about these workers because the brand incorporates its producer's individual story into the product image. An alternative coffee consumer might oppose the more anonymous brand culture of the Starbucks chain coffee shop that has popped up across the street from the locally owned company. Resistance to one brand culture, though, nonetheless involves engagement in another brand culture, albeit an alternative one. Even the coffee crop worker is tied into the brand culture, though the worker may never have the income or leisure time to sit idly in a coffee shop to enjoy the product they labor to harvest. The consumer is far from the only individual whose life is constituted within brand culture.

Brands as Image, Symbol, and Icon

To understand the idea that culture now operates through things, rather than through icons, symbols, and representations, it is helpful to look back at how brand culture emerged in the nineteenth century. Advertising was a major force in the rise of brands in modernity's industrial culture of commodity consumption of the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, brands moved more into the image culture of symbols and representations. Twentieth-century technologies for image reproduction, color printing, and media forms such as television were greatly motivated by industry demand for venues through which to promote the products being churned out by the proliferation of modern factories that were structuring many aspects of modern life.

Soap, a product strongly associated with the origins of modern advertising, was initially a product made at home, then produced and marketed in bulk without distinctive company labeling. In the nineteenth century, competing companies such as Procter & Gamble and Pears began branding soap. Glycerin soap bars marketed by the Pears Company of England were labeled to clearly designate the product as a specific brand distinct from its competitors. The company drew in their potential consumers by engaging the era's ethos of cleanliness being next to godliness. Advertisements hailed potential customers with cute images of children bathing, enlisting them into national hygiene standards with the slogan, "Have You Used Pears Soap Today?" Consumers thus were enlisted into an ideology of cleanliness: by purchasing Pears soap, one would be buying into that ideology. One of Pears soap's most famous ads reproduced *Bubbles*, an 1886 painting by British painter John Everett Millais. This iconic image of childhood innocence and purity promotes an ideology in which, by implication, one could participate through the use of Pears soap. This point is underscored with the brand slogan "pure and simple."

Procter & Gamble's and Pears's moves toward branding as a practice involving image and slogan signaled a turn toward art and design in this era of manufacturing and consumption. Products were also understood to be within the domain of creative design. The design of the product might be patented. Goods were recognized as a lucrative area of industrial artistry insofar as product design could be subject to patent ownership. But registration of the product's name—not just soap but Pears soap—was soon recognized as a lucrative aspect of the product, insofar as the name differentiated products from competitors. One could not claim brand ownership over the word soap, but one could claim copyright ownership over the brand Pears, associated with the slogan "pure and simple" and the image of childhood purity. Today, manufacturers and ad agencies employ artists (musicians, photographers, illustrators) to make ads and often present these ads as art. By using a fine art painting, the Pears company gained cultural authority. Millais, however, was criticized by other artists for allowing his painting to be used to sell soap.⁵

From these origins, brands have developed into increasingly complex business and cultural entities, designed and managed by agencies that specialize in visual and audio components, media buying and platform management, and data collection and analysis of consumption patterns and psychological impacts. Yet, as we noted at the beginning of this chapter, brands today are far more than images and media texts produced by design teams and displayed in news media, on screens, and in public space. They are an integral part of culture with effects and meanings



FIG. 7.1

Pears soap ad, 1888, using the painting *Bubbles* (1866) by John Everett Millais



FIG. 7.2
Hank Willis Thomas, *Scarred Chest*,
2003 (Lambda photograph, size
variable)

that move far beyond what their designers intend, forming a basis for experience. Most important, brands signify—they emit signs that consumers then engage with, use, appropriate, and remake. It is common for brand managers to talk of “loving” a brand, and a deep affective relationship with brands is often a goal of their marketing. Brands are often equated with feelings of belonging, authenticity, patriotism, and community—all important aspects of one’s emotional and civic life that are unlikely to be fulfilled by a consumer product. Yet, commodities are nonetheless presented as the means by which people make important emotional connections to others, and through which families are held together and nations are strengthened.

In a series titled *Branded*, the artist Hank Willis Thomas comments on the depths of this culture. He connects the original meaning of branding (which was to mark the flesh of a person or animal), the history of slavery, and the relationship of product branding to black culture. In this image, the branding of the Nike logo onto a black man’s torso refers not only to the intensity of consumer devotion to brands but also to the violence

of embodied commodification. Thomas refers to the particular role that young urban black consumers have played in the marketing of high-end athletic wear and products conveying “street cred.” In some cases, young black men are cast in advertisements for products marketed to middle-class, white suburban consumers. In this work, he also refers to the image of the male torso that Edward Weston made famous in *Neil*,

Nude (1925), which we discussed in Chapter 5 and which has been remade numerous times by such artists as Sherrie Levine and Amy Adler.

In the series *Priceless*, Thomas depicts the distance between the world of black urban youth and the language of privilege that dominates consumerism. The title refers to the MasterCard “Priceless” campaign that sold the idea that one could attain invaluable aspects of life by using the credit card. The MasterCard campaign asserted that products and services (airplane tickets, jewelry, gifts) may



FIG. 7.3
Hank Willis Thomas, *Priceless #1*,
2004 (Lambda photograph, size
variable)

be quantifiable (on one's MasterCard bill), but they are beyond monetary worth in their emotional value, hence "priceless." In this work, Thomas shows the tragically quantifiable aspects of a young black man's funeral. Thomas references the original ad campaign to make a biting commentary on the relationship of racial identity and disenfranchised lives to commercial commodity culture and to violence.

A deep integration of a brand meaning into the fabric of one's life, precisely what Thomas's work critiques, is the goal of many brand campaigns. One of the most successful brands of the last few decades has been Apple, which through iPods, iPads, iPhones, and Mac computers has integrated its individual brands as well as the overall corporate Apple brand into consumers' identities. The iPad and iPhone are branded as devices that extend the consumer's identity into communication networks, public space, and entertainment media. These brands are sold not as technological devices but as extensions of the self. As such, they participate in what the Frankfurt School called "pseudoindividuality," an experience of selfhood promoted by the culture industry. Pseudoindividuality refers to the ways that cultural forms can define and interpellate viewer-consumer-users as individuals, when in fact they are selling homogeneous experiences. Apple sells the idea that its devices will facilitate consumer individuality, yet its business model is dependent on selling that same idea and products to millions of consumers simultaneously.

Apple campaigns demonstrate that brands can be both marketed and experienced as providing deep, emotional connections. In these branding experiences, the equation of brand, image, and self takes hold. Identity is no longer simply signified by a brand; rather, identity is the product that we consume when we engage with a brand, whether we consume the brand as information, image, or product. Branding has become not just a way of selling goods, but an inescapable mode of everyday communication.

To create a world around and through a brand entails taking design to every component of the product. In some cases, text is eliminated altogether. One need only see the famous swoosh to think "Nike." Understanding words as components of visual, graphic design is a key factor in branding. The trend toward the visual was given a great boost in the late twentieth century, when the Internet transitioned from being a platform that supported only text to becoming a strongly visual and time-based multimedia platform. At the same time, the advertising industry shifted its focus from selling products with brand identity to selling brand identity as something that attaches to people, just as our screens became aspects of our lives, perhaps even extensions of our bodies, through which we engage with others, consume, and produce our selves.

We have noted throughout this book that one of the key aspects of visual culture studies is looking at how images and ideas travel across social domains, and brands are no exception to global and transmedia flows. Advertising styles have sometimes paralleled painting and design styles. This is in part because training in fine and commercial art often takes place within the same art colleges and departments. Throughout advertising's history, many fine artists have made a living as illustrators, because only

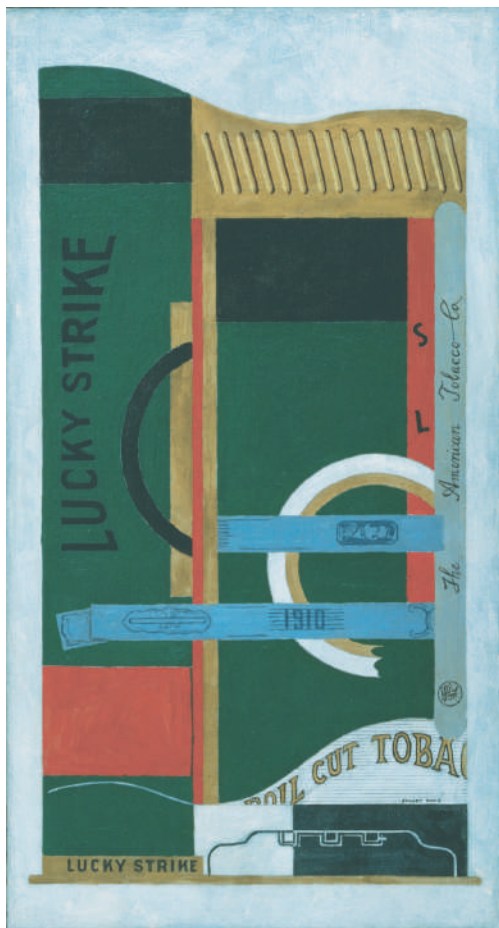


FIG. 7.4
Stuart Davis, *Lucky Strike*, 1921
(oil on canvas, 33¼ × 18")

a minute fraction of fine artists are able to support themselves without also teaching or doing commercial work. Artists have also mined the iconography of brands and logos to comment on consumer culture. While some have done so to critique the way brand culture limits social engagement and imagination, as Thomas does, other artists have done so with a kind of affectionate reference to familiar brands and their visual designs. In this 1921 painting, *Lucky Strike*, American artist Stuart Davis used a Cubist style to invoke Lucky Strike cigarettes and their meaning as an iconically American brand. Davis deconstructs the then-familiar colors and shapes of the Lucky Strike package and rearranges them in the Cubist style that flattens shapes and creates tensions between colors and forms, equating the brand, and the practice of advertising itself, with the new, modern, cutting-edge aesthetic of Cubism.

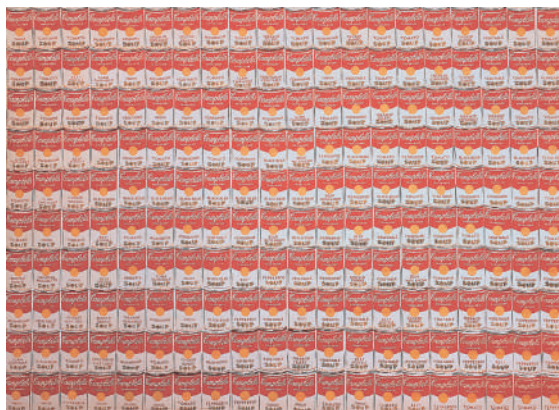
Davis's work prefigures the 1960s Pop art movement, when a critique of the American obsession with consumption paralleled a rise in production and consumption. During the 1960s, the newly emergent counterculture revived the Frankfurt School writings and ideas of the 1930s to condemn commercialism as a symptom of capitalist society gone wrong. During this time, the counterculture also eschewed notions of material success and commodity culture. Yet, in the art world,

Pop art aimed to dismantle distinctions between high and low culture, and in the process Pop artists often engaged with mass culture in serious ways. Pop artists took images from what was considered to be low culture, such as television, the mass

media, and comic books, and declared these images to be as socially significant as high art, in some cases appropriating from kitsch forms, as we discussed in Chapter 2. Pop also engaged playfully with advertisements and commercial art, incorporating commercial design elements and techniques into works of fine art to be shown in galleries and museums.

By incorporating television images, advertisements, and commercial products into their work, Pop artists demonstrated their love of popular culture even as they critiqued it. For instance, in what is now considered to be *the* classic Pop art work, Andy Warhol painted repeating images of Campbell's soup cans both to celebrate the aesthetic of repetition in mass culture and to question the boundaries between art and product design. The

FIG. 7.5
Andy Warhol, *Two Hundred Campbell's Soup Cans*, 1962 (synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen ink on canvas, 6' × 8'4")



composition's graphic flatness comments simultaneously on the banality of popular culture and mass production and the familiarity of the logo. Warhol's replication of the icon refers to the overproduction of goods in a commodity culture, in which repetition prevails. Yet at the same time, the painting is an affectionate homage to packaging and ad design, and to a consumer culture that values familiarity and convenience. Ever the clever and ironic commentator, Warhol declared that he loved repetition and liked to eat Campbell's soup every day.

Pop artists called attention to the artistry of image forms, such as advertisements and comic books, which were in their time considered to be low culture and not worthy of art world attention. In a deliberate attempt to paint an "ugly" picture, Roy Lichtenstein made paintings and prints that drew on the comic strip form, referencing not only its flat surface but also the stories that it tells. Lichtenstein's highly formal works are smooth and pristine, in contrast to the then-popular painterly brushstroke style of abstract expressionism. He simulated the dotted surfaces of screen-printed comics, painting by hand a tonal effect usually achieved by industrial-era mechanical print technology. This technology was a predecessor of digital dither-dots, which produce tonal range in digital color inkjet printed images. *The Refrigerator* (1962) is a painting that looks like an oversized comic frame. Lichtenstein blew up and hand-copied the grain of a screen-printed image so that the viewer can see its dot texture. In this close-up of a woman cleaning a refrigerator, he references 1960s advertising images in which housewives smile inanely while performing boring housework. The comic-book reference is both an affectionate homage to the form and a means of critiquing consumer culture and its false promises and stereotypes.



FIG. 7.6

Roy Lichtenstein, *The Refrigerator*, 1962 (oil on canvas, 68 × 56")

The Spaces of Modern Consumerism

Consumerism is as much about spatial relationships as it is about social and economic relationships. The late nineteenth-century rise of consumerism in European and American societies created new kinds of spatial and visual relationships. Architecture and design were key factors in the transformation of shopping into a leisurely and pleasurable activity of modern life. Whereas previously people purchased unbranded bulk goods in small stores by standing at a counter and asking a clerk for flour and sugar, now consumers had access to packaged goods out on visual display along aisles. These spaces were thus about visual pleasure and mobility.

Shopping arcades emerged in the early nineteenth century in European cities such as Paris, Milan, Berlin, and St. Petersburg. These arcades were covered streets that contained multiple small shops along each side. As described in Chapter 3, arcades anticipated the shopping center by creating an enclosed space in which



FIG. 7.7

Pavel Semechkin, interior view of the Passage shopping mall in St. Petersburg in 1850s (lithograph)

strolling among and looking at products was as much a part of the shopping experience as the actual purchase of goods. Theme parks of endless consumption, arcades became destinations in themselves. It is no surprise, then, that when cultural critic Walter Benjamin described the glittering seductions of commodity capitalism, he concentrated on Paris's arcades.⁶ The arcades maximized looking as a form of aspiration. Benjamin wrote, "both sides of these passageways, which are lighted from above, are lined with the most elegant shops, so that such an arcade is a city, even a world, in miniature."⁷ Benjamin, whose major life work was an unfinished, massive study, *The Arcades Project*, saw the essence of modernity in the Paris arcades, where the sidewalks were turned

into a kind of interior space and the unruliness of the city was shut out. A less familiar example of this phenomenon is the Passage, one of the first shopping malls, which opened in St.

Petersburg in 1848 to provide the Russian bourgeoisie with the newest fashions and luxury goods. With its novel gas lighting and vaulted steel-beamed glass ceiling, the Passage attracted peasants from the countryside as well as the urban rich, and for a time an admission fee was instituted to limit the crowds that flocked to

see this palace of luxury consumption, which included a zoo and a wax museum. The Russian author Fyodor Dostoyevsky wrote about the Passage in "Crocodile, or Passage Through the Passage." In 1934, the Passage was restructured to display only goods manufactured in the Soviet Union until the structure was bombed in World War II. The store was rebuilt and re-opened in 1961. On Nevsky Prospect, it is currently a privately held store featuring upscale goods.

Visual and spatial pleasure was an enormous part of the arcades' attraction, with spectacular glass design and metal architecture, sumptuously packaged goods, and interesting fellow strollers dressed for the occasion of seeing and being seen. With the emergence of a visual consumer culture, philosophers and writers described the figure of the *flâneur*: a man who strolls the streets of cities such as Paris and St. Petersburg, observing the urban landscape while moving through it. Poet Charles Baudelaire, like Benjamin, was fascinated by the *flâneur*. The *flâneur* moves through the city anonymously, distracted by sights, his goal the leisure activity of looking.

FIG. 7.8

A nineteenth-century *flâneur*, from M. Louis Huart, *Physiologie du flâneur*, with drawings by MM. Alophe, Daumier and Maurisset, Paris: Aubert et Cie, and Lavigne, 1841



The arcades were designed to protect citizens from rain and mud and from the risk and filth of horse-drawn carts and jostling crowds. They also brought to shopping the ethereal feel of the cathedral, a space in which light pours in to illuminate sacred objects, making them appear especially precious. The arcades shared with the mid-nineteenth-century European railroad stations this affinity with gothic cathedral architecture as a design referent for new structures of steel frame and paneled glass. These stations aimed to be visually magnificent, to evoke wonder at the technologies of modernism and mobility. It is not incidental that the Paris Gare D'Orsay, which was built as a train station for the 1900 Paris Exposition, was repurposed in 1986 as the Musée D'Orsay. The neoclassical Beaux Arts style of the museum echoes the arcades, as well as the world expositions buildings (discussed in Chapter 3).



FIG. 7.9
Musée D'Orsay, Paris

The experience of shopping as luxury-themed entertainment was fully realized in early department stores. The writer Emile Zola called Le Bon Marché, the first department store built in Paris, in 1852, a “cathedral of commerce.”⁸ Designed to inspire reverence for consumerism, department stores like this were introduced in cities such as London, Paris, New York, Hong Kong, Sydney, and Chicago to serve as leisure destinations, attracting visitors from the countryside as well as city residents. With their soaring ceilings, enormous staircases, sumptuously displayed goods, and elaborate décor, department stores inspired awe.

The key features of these luxury-themed department stores were spectacular visual display and design to enhance different modes of walking and looking. Interior displays were sometimes circular so that consumers would be encouraged to walk around them. The stores encouraged mobility through their spaces so that shoppers were exposed to multiple goods; they sold luxurious lifestyles even to those who could never buy or afford them and used window displays to draw people in from the street. As Jan Whitaker notes, these stores were also sites for technological

FIG. 7.10
Le Bon Marché department store in rendering of architecture reflecting expansions by Gustave Eiffel and Louis-Auguste Boileau, c. 1876



innovation (such as escalators, elevators, and other people-moving technologies, as well as air-conditioning).⁹ Window shopping and browsing thus gained a kind of currency with this new consumer environment as mobility emerged as a key aspect of modern life. Window shopping is in many ways a modern activity, one that is integral to the modern city that is designed for pedestrians, strolling, and crowds.

This nineteenth- and early twentieth-century visual culture of *flânerie*, window shopping, and department stores was related to the more mobile vision of modernity, which also opened the door to new kinds of social mobility. As Anne Friedberg writes, evidence of the increased mobility of vision can be seen in the nineteenth-century interest in panoramas, dioramas, photography, and motion picture film.¹⁰ In the nineteenth century, *flâneurs* were men, because respectable women were not allowed to stroll alone in the modern streets. As window shopping became an important activity with the rise of the department store, the female window shopper, a figure Friedberg calls the *flâneuse*, began to appear on the industrial city's streets. Gender is thus linked to mobility as a practice that enacts the right to appear in public, and requires a sense of being safe in public—a right and a condition not guaranteed to all women in all places, then or now. Friedberg notes that theories of film spectatorship can help us to understand the broader function of spatial, mobile practices of looking in the gendered consumer culture of the city. Though window shopping requires no admission fee, it aims to generate a thirst for buying among

women. Modern ways of looking were not limited to shopping but extended into all areas of urban life. David Serlin has argued that in thinking about the figure of the *flâneur*, we should consider not only gender but also sensory ability. He points to a

photograph of the famous American blind advocate Helen Keller window shopping in Paris to emphasize that shopping entails not only visual consumption but also tactile and aural pleasures.¹¹

The modern rise of urban populations and their increased mobility have contributed to the rise of consumerism. As urban centers expanded and systems of mass transit were built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, people became increasingly mobile, traveling by train from town to town and by trolleys within cities. As the automobile became a popular mode

FIG. 7.11

Helen Keller (left) and her companion, Polly Thomson, window shopping on the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, Paris, 1937



of transportation in the early twentieth century, yet another style of mobility emerged. Individuals used the roads and highway systems built after World War II to travel with enhanced independence and flexibility. As Freidberg has observed, the nineteenth-century *flâneur*'s mobile gaze gave way to the twentieth-century consumer's automobile visuality, modeled on the pace and scale afforded by the private family car.¹² The world of consumerism is thus closely tied to everyday forms of mobility.

This mobility included the flow of the advertising message to rural consumers. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, rural populations eagerly anticipated the delivery of each season's mail-order catalogues. The mail-order retail catalogue, which prefigured department stores, malls, and online shopping, rose up with the mail system in Britain in the mid-1800s. The retail catalogue was one of few sources through which rural consumers could engage in "window shopping." Sears billed itself as a global company ("our trade reaches around the world"), bringing a cornucopia of goods to the rural farmhouse and the suburban tract home, prior to the rise of suburban mall culture. These catalogues offered the pleasure of holding the thick, glossy catalog in one's hands, and settling in for leisure time to page through the color photographs, dreaming of owning the items and living the lifestyles depicted.

With the increased distances traveled by people in automobiles in the twentieth century, billboards became a central advertising venue. Although advertisements had been painted in large scale on city buildings for decades, the development of the automobile in the 1910s changed not only the landscape of communities and industries but also the experience of consumerism. Billboards were designed to be viewed on the go from the automobile, a machine connoting individual freedom and mobility. Historian Genevieve Carpio has shown how the perception of the mobile citizen changed with the increased auto-mobility of Mexican Americans, which was viewed by some as a threat to white middle-class culture.¹³

Many billboards used modern art styles and abstract forms to catch the attention of moving viewers. This billboard

FIG. 7.12

Wrigley's gum billboard, designed by Otis Shepard, 1939



was designed by advertising artist Otis Shepard in 1939 to sell Wrigley's Doublemint gum. Shepard designed many of the Wrigley ads of this period using a theme of twins, women sporting identical hats and identical expressions, to suggest "double the pleasure." The diagonal of the layout and the arrow evokes the movement of the cars rushing past. Billboards were part of a broader trend in which advertisers re-envisioned the ways in which consumers experienced the field of the gaze. As Catherine Gudis states in her book *Buyways*, billboard designers adopted an "aesthetics of speed." She writes, "as part of this new aesthetic, advertisers refined their use of the trademark, the slogan, and the massed image that allowed for a quick impression."¹⁴ Gudis notes that the outdoor advertising industry credited the movies with creating new viewing strategies and consumers' familiarity with speed and large-scale images. Thus, the integration of mobility into the consumer's visual consumption of advertising that began in the urban centers of the nineteenth century expanded exponentially by the mid-twentieth century to the wider landscapes of the interstate and cross-country highway.

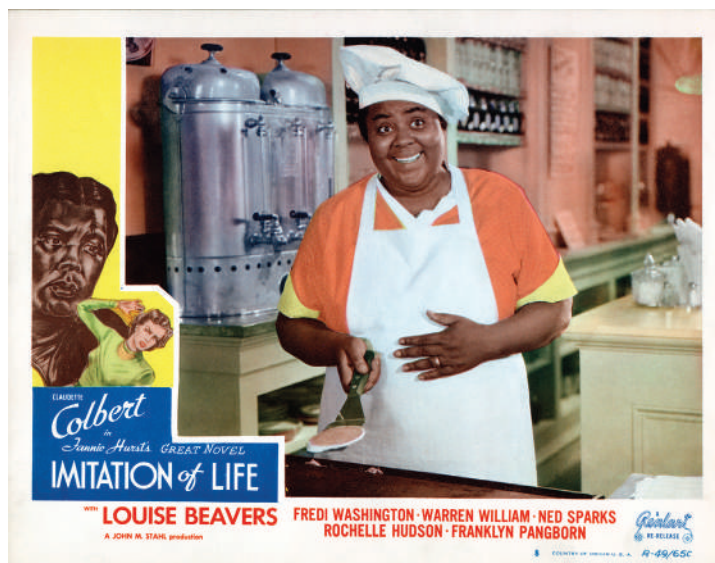
In the postwar period, consumers' embrace of the automobile as a symbol of individualism, freedom, and conspicuous consumption was part of a broader social engagement with consumption as a kind of civic duty. In the United States, consumerism was increasingly associated with citizenship, with the idea that to be a good citizen was to be a consumer who helped keep the job market strong by keeping the demand for new products strong. Historian Lizabeth Cohen calls

"a consumers' republic" the economic and cultural context in which the highest social values are equated with consumerism, so that citizens understand consumerism to be the primary avenue to achieving freedom, democracy, and equality.¹⁵ Thus, beginning in the 1950s, individual consumerism, rather than social policy, was offered as the means to achieve social change and prosperity.

This resulted, Cohen notes, in more racial inequality, decreased voter participation, and increased social and political segmentation.¹⁶ The post-war embrace of consumerism took place primarily around the suburban home, which was designed and imagined as the ultimate consumer platform through such items as color-coordinated kitchen appliances and television sets. The middle- and upper-class consumer showplace of

FIG. 7.13

Lobby card from the movie *Imitation of Life* (Universal/Realart Pictures), starring Louise Beavers, 1934



domesticity was a source of employment for the domestic worker, who ironically was compelled to leave her own family for long workdays while she tended to the domestic needs of white affluent families. The stereotype of the black maid as a cheerful fount of life lessons for the hapless white family reliant on her wisdom and generosity is epitomized in the role of Louise Beavers in the 1934 film *Imitation of Life*. Similarly, Kara Walker's sculpture *A Subtlety* (discussed in Chapter 3; Fig. 3.38) points to the stereotype of the mammy and the black domestic worker as the source of invisible labor that caters to the pleasure and desire of consumers—churning out sweets, sentiment, and caregiving from the kitchens of industrial America.

In the 1950s, television became a key force in many parts of the world for the expansion of advertising into the home. The advertising industry made major gains in countries in which the press and television were privately owned and operated commercial entities, not government-controlled forms of public communication. Television followed radio, on which the “soap opera” emerged in the 1930s, subsidized by product promotional spots (for soap, of course). In the United States, advertisement spots paid for by manufacturers became the television industry's primary revenue stream through its first decades, and advertising continues to be a major source of revenue for the industry: The price tag for thirty seconds of advertising during the 2016 Super Bowl was \$5 million. In the 1950s, entire shows were sponsored by a single company, which would pay a fee to showcase brands during lengthy intervals throughout the show. A company could even cancel a show if enough customers gave negative feedback. This gave way in the 1960s to one- to two-minute commercial spots, with as much as a sixth of a show's airtime consisting of short advertisements from different manufacturers. As airtime was restricted to precious minutes and sole-sponsored shows gave way to many manufacturers claiming short bits of broadcast time, competition for consumer attention heightened. The demand was intense for ads that could hold the gaze and leave an impression, and demand increased for professionals specializing in televisual advertising design and market research.

By the 1980s, with the rise of fee-based cable network programming, television advertising began to target niche audiences. Children in particular became the focus of brand advertising campaigns that were once again blended directly into programming content. Marketers replicated characters and props from children's shows in commercially sold toys, clothing, and housewares—objects that would draw children into fantasy relationships with television and movie characters beyond the screen. A show's brand culture thus became more pervasive through consumption of brand items. As media scholar Heather Hendershot explains in *Saturday Morning Censors*, toy-based videos and television programs that aired for young children while parents slept were essentially promotional media for products.¹⁷ Identification with animated characters such as Strawberry Shortcake and Care Bears drove up the demand for product tie-ins. One could eat out of bowls featuring these characters, write with pencils and notebooks covered with them, learn to read from

books about them, and even sleep in bedding and furniture imprinted with them. The brand tie-in has been used in the film industry for over a century. A powerful contemporary example of the reach of brand tie-ins in the formation of the child's identity is Disney's *Frozen*, the 2013 computer-animated musical film that is also a vast franchise, including music, a television crossover, a historical documentary, costumes, toys, linens and housewares, sequels, books, and theme park attractions. In 2015, *Frozen* was predicted to become the biggest franchise ever, lasting into the twenty-second century.¹⁸ Through the franchise, *Frozen*'s brand identity can touch all areas of a child's life. Even education is affected as backpacks, notebooks, and edutainment products such as a documentary, which includes information about the Earth's polar ice caps, make their way into schools. Thus, brand identity shapes the child's culture, informing their values, tastes, and perspectives.

Over a very short period of history, consumerism came to be understood as essential to the economic stability of many societies and has ultimately come to be understood as a primary activity of citizenship and belonging. Today, consumption continues to be thought of as a practice of leisure and pleasure and as a form of therapy. It is commonly understood that commodities fulfill our emotional needs. The paradox is that those needs are never truly fulfilled, as the forces of the market encourage us, sometimes through activating our insecurities, into wanting different and more commodities—the newest, the latest, and the best. These histories show that there are many ideological factors that undergird a consumer culture, and there are emotional factors as well that allow the ethos of consumerism to be seen as fulfilling certain kinds of emotional needs. Here it is helpful to return to the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, discussed in Chapter 3, who suggests that desire and “lack” are central motivating forces in our lives. We all experience something missing from our lives that we seek, most often by pursuing another person whom we desire. We try to fill this lack, but it is never really satisfied, even when our basic needs are met. It is this drive to fill our sense that we are missing something that allows advertising to speak to our desires so compellingly and abstractly. Yet, importantly, this fundamental lack is always unfulfilled. There is never a moment when it is replaced by full satisfaction. This sense of feeling unfulfilled is crucial to our psyches, motivating us to keep searching for the things (relationships, material goods, activities) that will help us to feel whole. In terms of consumer culture, lack provides an explanation for why we enjoy consuming yet always need more or feel disappointment afterward.

Brand Ideologies

As these concepts show us, brands are tied to desire. But brands do not just satisfy desires, they also produce them. Brands sell stories and make promises—of a better self-image, an improved appearance, more prestige, fulfillment, a healthier relationship to the world of brands, and so on. Images are crucial in this process of drawing

consumers into brand culture, but the images themselves are a small part of the culture of things and space that situate commodities in a culture. Early eighteenth-century advertisers used text-based print messages to make the public aware of their products. For example, a very early example of advertising, a 1705 text advertisement for the sale of rum, sugar, oil, spices, and chocolate appearing in the *Boston News-Letter*, gives the name and address of the vendor and directions to the place where he sells his goods, along with the statement that the prices are “reasonable.” The ad sells items transported from distant points around the globe to emerging centers of industrial commerce.

Widely regarded as the first continually published U.S. newspaper, the *Boston News-Letter* did not just market its ad space to vendors of goods. The periodical also offered a market in human beings—slave bodies—to masters, overseers, and estate administrators. Appealing to and cultivating the surveillant gaze of industrial population control and management, publishers offered ad space to slave owners to help them track down runaway slaves.

Slave advertisements became a common feature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, appearing alongside advertisements of goods and real estate, sometimes with woodcut prints illustrating products and people. Similarly, broadbills (a bit like leaflets or small text-heavy posters) were posted in the streets both to advertise goods and to advertise and track human chattel. By the mid-nineteenth century, printing made it possible to produce large movable posters advertising amusements like the circus, presaging the billboard. By the end of the nineteenth century, companies had begun to forge distinctive brand identities around their products through the consistent use of slogans and images. Trade dress, a product’s distinctive look and feel, emerged as a feature of product design as well as advertising design. Twentieth-century publishers increased photographic and color printing capabilities in combination with text capabilities to take the descriptive scope of ads to the level of narrative construction. By the end of the century, advertisers offered brand identity to consumers as something in which they could share through association with the world of the brand.

Since the advent of advertising, products that satisfy a specific need or desire have been promoted as also providing access to a new, desirable way of life, providing the look and feel of life “as it should be.” The Ralph Lauren (RL) brand is a good example of this. Ralph Lifshitz, the son of Russian Jewish immigrants living

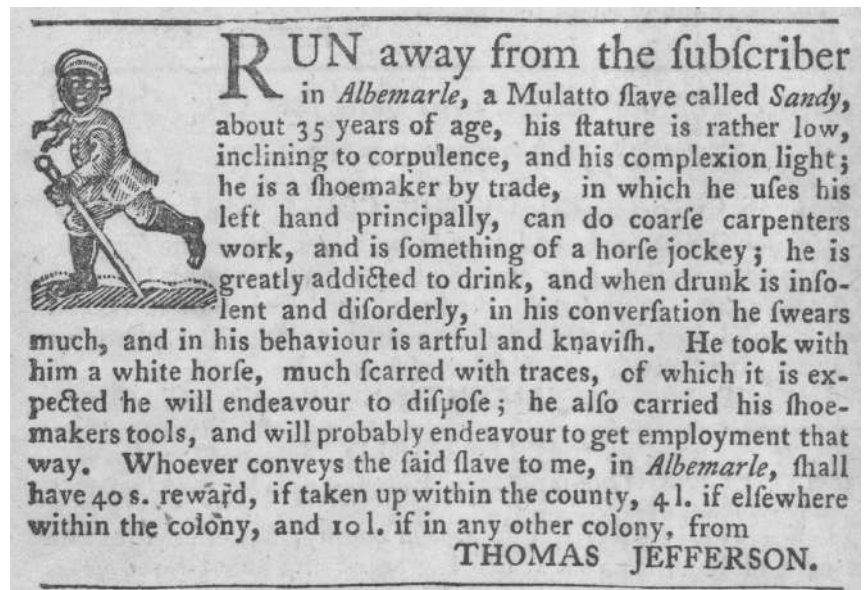


FIG. 7.14

Newspaper advertisement seeking help locating a runaway slave, posted by Thomas Jefferson in *The Virginia Gazette*, Williamsburg, September 14, 1769



FIG. 7.15

"Guide to a Well-Dressed Bed,"
online RL Style Guide, Home Features,
Ralph Lauren, 2016

in the Bronx, launched the company as a men's tie manufacturer in 1967. Lifshitz later changed his surname to Lauren and launched Polo, a clothing line designed to look like the sporting and bespoke (tailor-made) fashions typically seen on members of the British leisure class and affluent U.S. white Anglo-Saxon

Protestants living in stately country homes. Capitalizing on the cheap labor afforded by offshore fabric and garment manufacturing plants, Lauren's company produced "classy" looking leisure wear cheaply and sold this mass-produced clothing at prices that middle-class people could afford. The middle-class consumer thus could put on an aristocratic look without ever coming close to approaching that economic status. By the end of the 1990s, one could also buy Ralph Lauren paint for one's walls and sheets for one's bed, making it possible to make one's whole world match the look and feel of the brand's aristocratic taste culture. RL brand messages present consumers with possibilities for building a world, a physical place of one's own that materially simulates signifiers of wealth. A middle-class consumer could never afford the luxurious multi-million-dollar penthouses on Manhattan's Upper West Side. But that consumer could afford to paint their mid-century tract home in classic RL colors, upholster their department store furniture in RL fabrics, and buy RL reproductions of classic high-end goods and furnishings to approximate the look and feel of wealth. This is still a matter of creating an image culture through the brand. But to the look and feel of goods, to their representational capacity, now also has been added physical things, and the physical domain of place and space.

The values of individuality, self-fulfillment, and choice undergird the messages of advertising and consumerism. This 2013 Jeep ad promotes this message. "True freedom of choice," the tag line printed at the bottom of the ad, appears as a part of Jeep's trade dress (the look and feel of a brand, achieved through product and advertising design). Graphics equate the Jeep vehicle with "freedom": the Jeep gives you the freedom to "go" (symbolized by the Jeep image right where we would check

the box) rather than “stay” (symbolized by the blank square of sky). The equation of a large, gas-guzzling car with freedom is made here through another familiar trope: humans conquering nature. “Freedom” is the opportunity to drive through natural landscapes unimpeded by environmental concerns. Advertising from the 1980s forward has increasingly emphasized individual choice, regardless of consequences. “Freedom” is crucial to a person’s happiness and to the functioning of a society, and hence it is a dominant theme in brand identity.

Individual choice has long been tied to the right to consume. Consumer societies emerged in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century modernity when industrialization and urban growth were crucial factors in the development of an economy organized around the production and consumption of goods. This process entailed the transformation of citizens and workers into modern consumers, individuals who saw purchases of mass-produced goods as legitimately and necessarily motivated by desire for status and symbolic cultural capital, and not just by need or for investment. Indeed, products increasingly are designed to last for shorter and shorter periods of time (planned obsolescence). Both their use value and their value as investments diminish considerably over time. For example, toaster ovens last less than five years, on average—in 2010, around 11 million were sold in the United States alone. The average life of a mobile phone is about two years, but many consumers replace their phone when a newer model is released, just to be in style, even if they cannot really afford to do so. In a consumer society, individuals are confronted with and surrounded by a vast assortment of goods, and the pressure is intense to keep up with the changing design of things, and not just changing styles as image. The characteristics of those goods change (or appear to change) constantly, driven by changes in style and design and not necessarily by enhanced functionality. Thus, even products that embody tradition and heritage, such as Quaker Oats cereal, are marketed with new messages and trade dress every few years, along with new recipes, making them over in their material substance, not just as image.

In a consumer society, there are often great social and physical distances between the manufacture of goods and their purchase and use. For example, automobile factory workers are likely to live far from the places where the cars they help build are bought and sold, and they may never be able to afford to buy the cars they make. In the present



FIG. 7.16

Jeep ad, 2015

global economy, with the outsourcing of labor and manufacturing, these distances are extreme. Increased industrialization and bureaucratization throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries decreased the number of small entrepreneurs and increased large manufacturers; people traveled longer distances to reach their jobs, as factories were moved from city centers to the peripheries. In the 1960s, Western industrial production began to be “offshored,” a strategy in which companies, especially U.S.-led multinational corporations, relocated their manufacturing from the United States to special economic zones (SEZs), designated areas in economically disadvantaged “host countries” set up with worker housing, easy proximity to shipping, and corporation-friendly tax and business laws. This practice of placing a distance between those who produce and those who consume contrasts with feudal and rural societies of the past, in which there was proximity between producers and consumers, as in the case of a shoemaker whose shoes were sold to and worn by residents in the village where he worked. As production became less visible to consumers, consumption was stripped of the reality-checking ethical potential inherent in living with or close to those who work hard and are paid low wages to produce the goods and services we consume.

Historian T. J. Jackson Lears has described the early turn to commoditized objects as a substitute for direct emotional connection as part of a broader “therapeutic ethos” that pervades industrial countries in late modernity.¹⁹ As the industrial era progressed, social values in Western capitalist states shifted. The tendency to valorize a strong work ethic, champion civic responsibility, and engage in self-sacrifice to succeed gave way to the tendency to valorize goods, and engagement in leisure, self-fulfillment, and the social activity of buying emerged as signifiers of success. Whereas in the United States the Protestant-influenced ethos of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries affirmed the values of saving and thriftiness, by the mid-twentieth century, in the wake of the Great Depression, spending was linked to pride in belonging to the burgeoning middle class. Social betterment and a healthy economy were tied to one’s ability to amass manufactured goods such as cars, appliances, and clothing. In a constantly changing modern culture, goods served as a sign of self-improvement and a means of demonstrating to oneself and to others that one was climbing the class ladder. The weekend shopping excursion became a form of therapeutic self-fulfillment and leisure, a reward for the exhaustion and boredom that resulted from work.

With the 2008 economic crash, many middle-class consumers lost their jobs and homes, and much of the working class descended into poverty throughout the industrialized West. Global financial instability led to studies revealing that wealth and income were increasingly concentrated disproportionately in the upper 1 percent of the world’s population, with inequality increasing most dramatically in English-speaking countries. The therapeutic ethos that was an essential element of a burgeoning middle-class consumer culture prior to that economic collapse remains strong despite the shrinking of the middle class, but many information-age groups are also using social media to challenge consumer culture and wealth concentration. A strong force for change came from the Occupy Wall Street movement, which formed around 2011 in solidarity with Spain’s 15-M anti-austerity protest movement and with initiative from Adbusters, an

anti-consumerist, pro-environment group that uses “culture jams” to oppose consumerism, corporate control of the economy, and wealth concentration. These groups offered new models of activism and critiques of the system through popular slogans, posters, and, most important, social media campaigns. They aimed to debunk the view that modern products could appease the anxieties and identity crises produced by the escalating pace of life in a digital world, pointing out that with extreme wealth concentration, the chance of achieving middle-class success has dramatically narrowed for the majority of people in the world.

Advertising and brand culture has been strongly tied to cultures of health and well-being. Since the 1990s, the service culture of the gym has been billed as a solution to the health problems that arise from working at a desk job all week. Similarly, in the late nineteenth century, soft drinks were promoted as health tonics and sold at drugstore soda fountains to working-class subjects at a time when sugar was a more rare and costly treat. This ad participates in the therapeutic ethos by offering Coca-Cola to late nineteenth-century consumers with the promise of relief for physical and mental exhaustion, what we would call “stress” today. Anthropologist Robert Foster underscores the dire health impacts that resulted from this strategy of advertising Coca-Cola as a global product that “adds life” to poor, nutritionally compromised consumers, as Coke in some cases was consumed as a cost-saving strategy to get through a day in which there might be just one meal.²⁰

The devastating impact of this kind of global advertising approach was demonstrated dramatically in the 1970s when the Nestlé Corporation mounted infant formula advertising campaigns throughout the world suggesting that commercial formula is nutritionally superior to breast milk. Of course, formula is more expensive than breast milk, yet mothers wanted what was being promoted as “the best” for their babies and so began to rely on formula after humanitarian aid centers gave away samples. Babies suffered malnutrition and death as a result of the false advertising message’s promotion of dependency on a commodity to mothers who could not afford to buy the amount of formula needed to sustain their babies’ lives. Worldwide outrage ensued. The scandal



FIG. 7.17
Coca-Cola ad, 1890



FIG. 7.18
Rachael Romero, San Francisco
Poster Brigade, *Boycott Nestlé*, 1978

resulted in changed advertising regulations following World Health Organization and U.S. Senate hearings about the Nestlé formula marketing messages and the complicity of health and aid organizations in product promotion. This scandal provoked an international boycott of the brand that is still ongoing in an era during which Nestlé, as a global conglomerate, acquires bottled water from drought-stricken states and other manufacturers continue to make false claims about product health benefits.

The therapeutic ethos has emerged with different cultural and religious shadings in the current era of the quantified self, during which self-monitoring and self-improving products have become popular, particularly in Japan and China. The growth of Japanese consumerism was driven by the country's painful emergence from the devastation of World War II and the loss of its imperial monarchy. In China, consumerism and credit cards emerged in the late twentieth century hand in hand with a socialist system that maintains the value of communal goods. Many aspects of contemporary Chinese society embrace values such as self-improvement and self-fulfillment through consumerism, even though those values are in conflict with the values of communism that have structured Chinese society since the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949. Consumerism has global dimensions, yet its forms have taken shape and had impacts that are quite varied, reflecting the social values and economic and political systems under which a given brand message and market strategy operate.

Commodity Fetishism and the Rise of the Knowing Consumer

Brands are not simply meaning-generating consumer products. They are also commodities that are bought and sold in a social system of exchange. As noted earlier, consumer society involves changing systems of economics, production, and distribution and also changing values related to leisure, self-fulfillment, and individuality. Analyses of commodities and how they function come to us primarily through Marxist theory, which offers both a general analysis of the role of economics in human history and a specific analysis of how capitalism functions. It is precisely because Marxist theory has a critique of capitalism that it can help us to understand how capitalism functions. Given that most societies today take capitalism for granted, we rarely examine its underlying assumptions. As we discuss further, Marxist theory is limited in how it can help us understand contemporary consumerism because the complexity of the relationship of culture and consumerism today is something Marx could never have imagined in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, some of the core concepts of Marxist theory remain useful in thinking about consumerism today.

For instance, Marx's concepts of exchange value and use value reveal the abstract and often intangible ways that expensive brands can acquire value. Use value refers to how a commodity is used in a particular society and exchange value to what it costs in a particular system of exchange. Marxists critique capitalism's emphasis on exchange value, in which things are valued not for what they really

do but for what they are worth in abstract, monetary terms. As the Frankfurt School theorists would say, we value the price of the ticket over the experience itself; this explains why sometimes goods sell more when their prices are raised.

A look at products shows how exchange value works. Certain commodities have important use value in our society—food and clothing, for instance, which we feel we cannot live without. Yet we can see that within those categories there is a broad range of exchange values. A loaf of mass-produced bread has a significantly lower exchange value (costs less) than a loaf of high-end specialty bakery bread, though they both have the same use value. Similarly, a name-brand designer handbag has a higher exchange value than a perfectly useful, inexpensive handbag purchased at Target. Both have the same use value, but different exchange values. Indeed, the broad informal economic networks of knockoffs and fake brands that proliferate in urban centers throughout the world demonstrate the degree to which there is little difference between authentic brands and their fake versions (much to the consternation of designer brand managers). Yet this theory does not take into account other forms of value that are equally meaningful in our society—the designer shirt may seem important to one's sense of style, perhaps even to the image one feels is necessary for one's school or workplace. A high-end car may be considered an important business asset if one is waiting for the valet after pitching a movie in Hollywood. An expensive suit might be considered to have use value in certain professions like business and law. The idea of use value is tricky, because the concept of what is and is not useful is highly ideological—one could argue endlessly about whether or not certain so-called leisure goods are “useful,” and it is difficult to assess the use value of such qualities as pleasure and status.

One of the most helpful concepts in understanding how consumerism creates an abstract world of signs separate from the economic context of production is the idea of commodity fetishism. This refers to the process by which mass-produced goods are emptied of the meaning of their production (the context in which they were produced, such as a factory and the labor that created them) and then filled with new meanings in ways that both mystify the product and turn it into a fetish object. For instance, a designer shirt does not contain within it the meaning of the context in which it is produced. The consumer is given no information about who sewed it, the factory in which the material was produced, or the society in which it was made. Rather, the product is affixed with logos and linked to advertising images that imbue it with abstract meanings, such as coolness, authenticity, or luxury. This erasure of labor and the means of production has larger social consequences. Not only does it devalue labor, making it hard for workers to take pride in their work, it also allows consumers (most of whom are also workers) to remain ignorant of working conditions, the consequences of global outsourcing, and the relationship of brand images to corporate practices.

The tensions between consumerism and labor have only become stronger in postindustrial global capitalism, in which the production of goods has been increasingly outsourced. For example, many products designated “made in the United States” (such as



FIG. 7.19
Cartoon by Roz Chast, 1999

some automobile brands) are in fact assembled in the United States from parts made in other countries. With the rise of the shipping container in the late twentieth century, goods could be shipped in large metal boxes taken directly from large container ships to tractor-trailers and railway cars for distribution. The price of shipping goods globally fell significantly, prompting an increased outsourcing of labor. This means that most of the goods produced by companies based in affluent nations are made by low-paid laborers elsewhere. Thus, the distance in global capitalism between the workers who produce commodities and the consumers who purchase them has only grown larger, in both geographic and social terms. Most of the clothing sold in North America and Europe is manufactured by low-paid workers in China, Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines, and India. Indeed, only a very small fraction of clothing sold in the United States, one of the world's largest clothing markets, is made by workers in the United States. The complexity of global outsourcing means that as consumers we may feel

helpless when we do learn of labor conditions because we feel there

is little we can do to address them. This cartoon by Roz Chast makes fun of the process that many of us experience when we think about the troubling relationship between labor exploitation and the goods we own and then decide just to wear our clothing anyway.

Commodity fetishism is the inevitable outcome of mass production, advertising and marketing, brand design, and the mass distribution of goods. It is essentially a process of mystification that not only empties commodities of the meaning of their production, but also fills them with new, appealing meanings, such as empowerment, beauty, and sexiness. This fetishization often affirms deeply personal kinds of relationships to commodities.

It is easiest to see commodity fetishism at work by looking at instances in which it fails. For instance, Nike has distinguished itself among a number of brands for its complex marketing of empowerment, in particular to women. Nike sells female empowerment as explicitly linked to sport. Their ads sell self-empowerment through exercise and control of one's body and self-determination. Yet, for decades, Nike has been critiqued for its production practices. In 1992, there was public outcry over the fact that Nike had outsourced their shoe production to Indonesia, South Korea, China, and Vietnam, where women workers were underpaid and working under terrible conditions. The companies to which they outsourced production did not comply with Nike's own stated Code of Conduct, which, for example, condemned child labor,

mandated fair wages, placed caps on shifts, and mandated worker health and safety programs. When these conditions became known, the process of commodity fetishism was momentarily ruptured. The empowerment of the Nike commodity sign was undermined by revelations about the actual labor conditions that produced Nike shoes and that were disempowering to the women making them. The shoes could no longer be stripped of the meaning of their conditions of production and “filled” with the signifiers of feminism and women’s healthy living. The company responded to the criticism by changing its practices, in an attempt to redeem its image as a company that supports women’s health and human rights. Since the scandal, Nike has monitored its factories and been more transparent about these conditions. Nevertheless, revelations of bad working conditions continue to emerge for most mainstream brands precisely because of the complexly layered management of such labor, with many middle-man companies between the workers and the brands.

Artist Hans Haacke, who has often focused on conflicts of interest in the corporate sponsorship of museums, created a series of works that address the workers who are rendered invisible by the process of commodity fetishism and the costs to these workers of their labor. In a 1979 image, Haacke used the famous 1970s Breck shampoo campaign featuring a well-coiffed “Breck girl” to critique Breck’s labor practices. In Haacke’s remake, the text refers specifically to the fact that American Cyanamid, then Breck’s parent company, gave women workers of childbearing age whose jobs posed reproductive health risks the “choice” of losing their jobs, transferring, or being sterilized. Haacke’s “ad” is thus not only a play on Breck’s campaign, but a political statement about corporations’ oppressive treatment of workers. The image marks the absence of the female Breck worker in the original Breck ad and renders ironic the idealized Breck girl.

Haacke’s work was ahead of its time. Ad remakes proliferate today. As we discussed in Chapter 2, consumers also engage in a range of tactics, including appropriation and parody, to question mainstream brand strategies and messages. “Culture jamming” is a practice that emerged in the late twentieth century as a form of expression in which artist and consumer activists appropriate mainstream ads to make parodies and send-ups. They post these remakes in public places, inviting viewers to think critically about the product claims and advertising strategies the original ad promotes. Postmodern advertising campaigns appropriated this strategy right back, designing self-parodying ads to show viewers that advertisers



FIG. 7.20

Hans Haacke, *The Right to Life*, 1979

know and respect that consumers are savvy individuals who are aware that seduction is at work in advertising, and who even enjoy that play of brand seduction. The message to the consumer is thus “we respect your intelligence” and “we know you engage knowingly and willingly in the seductive branding we offer.”

Culture jamming borrows from the legacy of the Situationist artists and writers in France in the 1960s (discussed in Chapter 6), the most famous of whom was Guy Debord, who advocated political interventions at the level of daily life to counter the passivity and alienation of modern life and spectacle. In his manifesto on culture jamming, Kalle Lasn (founder of Adbusters) borrows from the Situationist philosophy to advocate jamming the messages of consumer culture. Lasn writes, “culture jamming is, at root, just a metaphor for stopping the flow of spectacle long enough to adjust your set.”²¹ One of the primary strategies of the Situationists was called “détournement,” or the rerouting of messages to create new meanings. Many ad parodies, like this Nike culture jam, use the codes of ad messages to turn their meanings around.

Throughout the twentieth century, cultural theory was largely focused on critiques of consumerism. The Frankfurt School theorists, for instance, saw the escalating role of commodities as a kind of death knell for meaningful social interaction. For these theorists, commodities were “hollowed out” objects that propagated a loss of identity and eroded our sense of history. Yet today’s brand culture demonstrates that the range of engagement with consumerism spans active engagement, co-opted critique, and alternative forms of branding. In many modern industrial societies, the advertising pro-

fession underwent a dramatic change in the 1960s, as advertisers and marketers began to see themselves as creative professionals rather than as craftsmen who deployed scientific rules about per-

suasion. This occurrence is commonly referred to as a “creative revolution” in advertising. In response to the general social upheaval of the times, with its emerging emphasis on youth culture, and to the fact that consumers were increasingly mobile, advertisers began to place more emphasis on being entertaining and intriguing. They rejected the rule-bound conventions of 1950s advertising, in which ads often condescended to consumers (in particular women consumers), and embraced the idea that creativity, humor, and parody should dominate ad styles.

The ad campaign that epitomizes the shifts of 1960s advertising is the famous DDB campaign for Volkswagen, which at the time was largely seen as a “Nazi” car that was not aligned with American values. The campaign, which featured large white spaces, elegant modern font, honesty, and dry humor, succeeded in selling the idea that the VW Beetle (a car that was

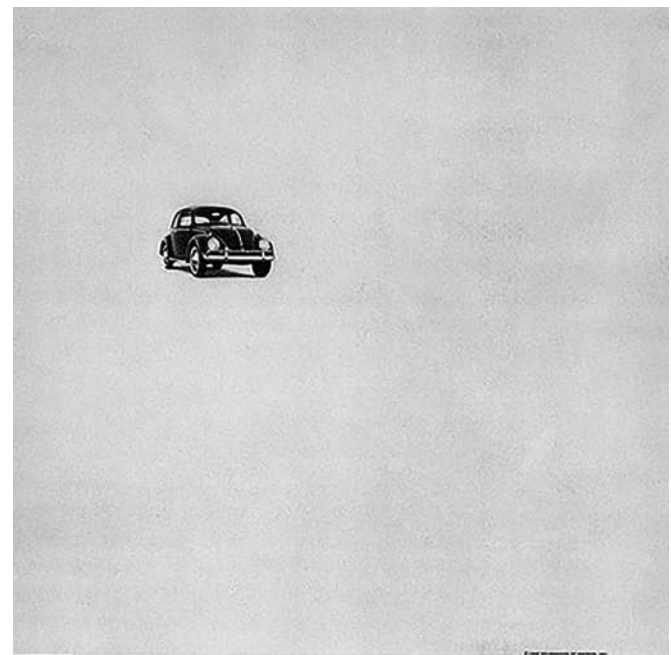
FIG. 7.21

Adbusters culture jam of Nike ads



a dramatic change from the big-finned, excessive cars of the 1950s) was emblematic of the best of 1960s alternative values, such as thinking “small” and being honest. In 1963, VW ran an ad with no picture or headline, titled “How to do a Volkswagen ad.” It read: “call a spade a spade, and a suspension a suspension, not something like ‘orbital cushioning.’ Speak to the reader, don’t shout, he can hear you, especially if you talk sense.” This kind of strategy sold the idea of a brand that respected consumers (regardless of whether or not the company did), and the cars became an emblem of alternative 1960s values.

Importantly, this change was part of a larger cultural dynamic through which marketers began to see youth culture and alternative cultures as sites that could be appropriated to mark commodities as hip and cool. The marketing of coolness, which began in the 1960s, thus defines a much larger social shift. As cultural critic Thomas Frank has noted, in the 1960s advertising began to appropriate the language of the counterculture (largely of hippie culture). Although the counterculture saw itself as rejecting consumerism and going back to nature, Frank argues that not only was the counterculture not as anti-consumerist as it might have seemed, but also those ideals were easily appropriated to sell products. He writes: “The counterculture seemed to have it all: the unconnectedness that would allow consumers to indulge transitory whims; the irreverence that would allow them to defy moral puritanism, and the contempt for established social rules that would free them from the slow-moving, buttoned-down conformity of their abstemious ancestors.”²² Frank shows how the appropriation of anti-consumerist values into consumerism itself in the 1960s signified an effective end to the puritan ethos that had been challenged by the therapeutic ethos over the twentieth century. This was accomplished in part through parody and irony, which would become the hallmarks of postmodern style (we discuss this more in Chapter 8).



Think small.

Our life isn't so much of a novelty any more. A couple of dozen college kids don't try to squeeze inside it. The guy at the gas station doesn't ask where the gas goes. Nobody even shines at our shape. In fact, some people who drive our life	Never don't even think 32 miles to the gallon is going any great guns. Or using five parts of oil instead of five quarts. Or never needing anti-freeze. Or racking up 40,000 miles on a set of tires. That's because once you get used to	some of our economy, you don't even think about them any more. Except when you squeeze into a small parking spot. Or renew your small insurance. Or pay a small repair bill. Or trade in your old VW for a new one. Think it over.
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FIG. 7.22
Volkswagen “Think Small” ad
designed by Julian Koenig for
Doyle Dane Bernbach, 1959

Social Awareness and the Selling of Humanitarianism

The blurring of boundaries between branding and culture has produced a crossover culture between branding and social responsibility, with social advocacy and philanthropy now an active part of brand profiles. Marketers attach meanings of social responsibility, civic engagement, environmentalism, and feminism to particular

brands, so that their meaning transcends the particular product. Social responsibility is now a key factor in a broad array of brands, with mainstream brands such as Coke, Pepsi, and McDonalds all maintaining websites that tout their social awareness projects and profiles. This is an extension of commodity fetishism, selling meanings that products cannot possibly achieve, yet this trend, which is variously termed corporate social responsibility, cause marketing, and commodity activism, is much more than the appropriation of social issues into branding. It is also about the infiltration of the values and language of branding into social activism and philanthropy. These kinds of blurrings are increasingly common in postmodern brand culture, and while one can critique the simple and sometimes crass attachment of social awareness to certain products, the fact is that many of these campaigns have succeeded in raising public awareness of social issues through branding. Contradictions inevitably abound in this domain, with activism as consumerism, celebrity humanitarianism, and commodity-driven social resistance, and these new modes demand new ways of thinking about activism and consumerism.

Green marketing was one of the first trends of social awareness advertising, with brand managers equating particular brands with environmental awareness and a “green” lifestyle. Although much of this marketing is in relation to products that are designed to be less harmful to the environment, commodity fetishism makes it easy for advertisers to equate products that have no environmental benefits with greenness—green is an easy signifier to attach to any product. Many green marketing ads, often referred to as “greenwashing” ads, obfuscate the truth about environmental impact.

Controversial companies, such as oil companies, have often used social awareness marketing as a kind of image enhancer. The oil company Chevron, for instance, has long sold its brand as socially responsible, with campaigns such as its People Do campaign that for many years equated its logo with environmental projects even though its message was about how individuals

(rather than corporations) can make a difference. Such ads allowed Chevron, one of the world’s worst environmental offenders, to sell itself as green. Yet, in the current cultural context, such messages are easily hijacked. In 2010, Chevron produced its We Agree campaign, in which newspaper-like posters stating (relatively vague) positive values are stamped “We Agree” as if the company is signing on to them. In this ad, the relatively uncontroversial statement “put technology to work” is accompanied by an employee image suggesting that Chevron does so by supporting the

FIG. 7.23

Chevron “We Agree” global campaign, from Kazakhstan series, McGarryBowen, 2010



advancement of individual workers in the global industry.

This campaign's intent to make Chevron seem benign, concerned, and socially responsible was targeted by the social activist pranksters The Yes Men (whom we discussed in Chapter 6). Using their typical strategy of impersonating corporations by issuing fake press releases taking radically progressive positions, The Yes Men impersonated the Chevron corporate voice with a press release and a series of ads that took the promises of corporate responsibility further.

The Yes Men ads stamp "Oil Companies Should Fix the Problems They Create" and "Oil Companies Should Clean Up Their Messes" with the requisite "We Agree." At the time of this campaign, Chevron was fighting a lawsuit with indigenous groups in Ecuador about its responsibility for \$27 billion in cleanup costs.²³ After the initial press attention, The Yes Men ran a contest for print, web, and TV ads satirizing Chevron's greenwashing. According to their website, "hundreds of submissions poured in and were posted online, and were wheat pasted in cities nationwide, effectively derailing the shiny new \$50 million [Chevron] campaign."²⁴

Social responsibility has also been an aim of celebrity promotion and the fashion industry. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, for example, fashion designers were energized to participate in AIDS activism when many in their industry died in the epidemic's early years. Some fashion designers, such as Kenneth Cole, have used their slogans to sell both their merchandise and the idea that fashion can relate to social awareness. Cole's brand is so aligned with social awareness that in 2013 he produced a series of videos and an online digital archive for the company's thirtieth anniversary outlining its social awareness history. Cole states, "by using our brand to discuss relevant social issues, we have made an effort to build a connection to others to promote not just what they look like on the outside but who they are on the inside."²⁵ Although Cole has what we might call social issue cred, because he has connected his brand financially and in ads to social causes for so long, he has often played irreverently with the contradictions between his products (high-end shoes and clothing) and social issues. For instance, he did a series of ads on gun control, like this



FIG. 7.24

Yes Men Chevron ad parody, 2010

FIG. 7.25

Kenneth Cole ad, 2015

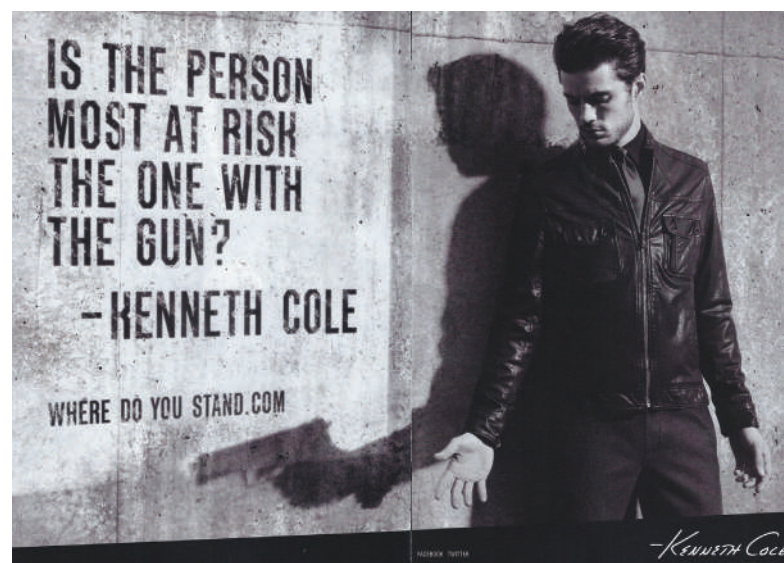




FIG. 7.26

Louis Vuitton “Core Values” ad campaign, 2011

ad, that asked provocative questions about guns while selling clothing.

A dissonance between luxury fashion and social awareness is also evident in the high-profile 2007–12 Louis Vuitton campaign, Core Values. For this promotion of high-end Louis Vuitton bags and accessories, celebrities such as Bono, Andre Agassi, and former Soviet Union leader Mikhail Gorbachev were posed in various locales where they were inspired about travel. The campaign supported the Climate Project and other initiatives, and many of the celebrities donated their fees to charity. Nevertheless, its connection of the brand to social issues was tenuous. In this 2011 ad, Angelina Jolie poses with a Louis Vuitton bag in Cambodia, accompanied by a video in which she explains her experiences in Cambodia and her humanitarian work. The ad circulated widely and received significant publicity, but it was also critiqued for juxtaposing a high-end handbag with a South Asian landscape. As the *Guardian* wryly noted,

“what is Angelina Jolie doing in a swamp with a £7,000 handbag?”²⁶

In the realm of feminism and female empowerment, the combination of branding and social awareness has produced new forms of brand culture. In 2006, the Dove Real Beauty campaign began by posting online a video, *Evolution*, which was a time-lapse of an ordinary young woman being transformed into a model on a billboard, through styling and digital reshaping of her features. The video, which went viral, was the lead-in to the Dove Real Beauty campaign, which uses online videos, social media, and self-esteem workshops to sell its brand as signifying positive self-esteem

for girls. The campaign also produced a series of ads featuring “real women” of different sizes and ethnicities, and the company started the Dove Self-Esteem Fund, which aims to be “an agent of

FIG. 7.27

Dove “Real Curves” ad, Ogilvy & Mather, 2004

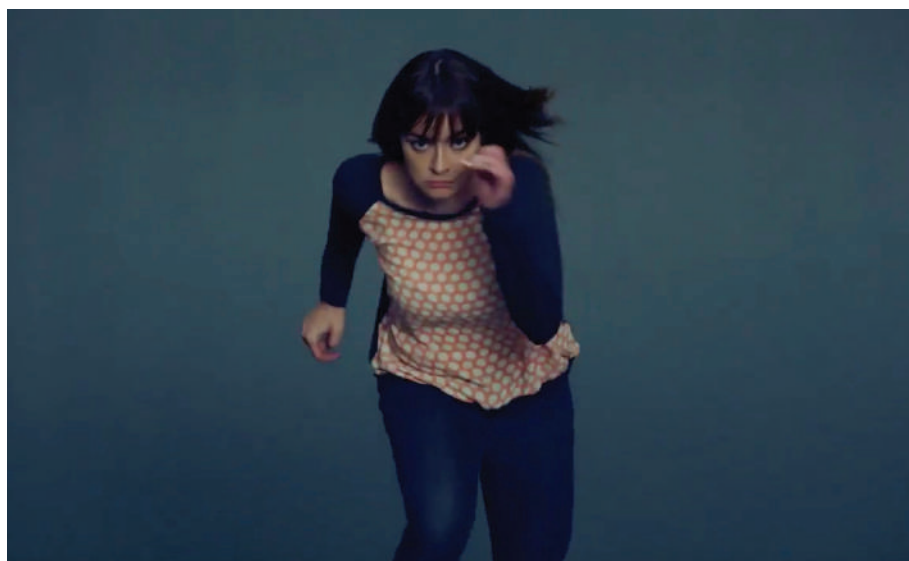


change” in educating girls and women about definitions of beauty. As Banet-Weiser writes, Dove consumers are entreated to participate in online self-esteem workshops, testimonials, and other projects. It’s easy to criticize such a campaign for the disconnect between the brand (for soap and beauty products) and its social project, but as Banet-Weiser writes, the Dove campaign “builds the Dove brand by ‘engaging’ consumers and building ‘authentic’ relationships with these consumers as social activists.” She adds, the campaign “is but one example from the contemporary marketing landscape that demonstrates the futility of a binary understanding of culture as authentic versus commercial.”²⁷

In this campaign, Dove’s meaning is transformed beyond a brand meaning or a product meaning. Dove becomes itself a cultural factor, a force in social activism around young girls’ self-esteem. This campaign has inspired numerous other brand campaigns targeted at young girls, a powerful consumer

FIG. 7.28

Screen shots from Always “*Like a Girl*” video, dir. Lauren Greenfield, 2015



demographic. Most notable is the Always Like a Girl campaign, which features a video produced by documentary filmmaker Lauren Greenfield, who asks older girls, boys, men, and women what it means to do things “like a girl,” resulting in an array of sexist stereotypes. Greenfield then asks a group of young girls what it means, and they perform activities of strength and agility. The ad asks what happens to girls’ confidence at puberty—this is precisely the group that Procter & Gamble wants to reach with its feminine care products. The video has had a life of its own on social media. Such a campaign participates beyond the brand meaning in a larger cultural and social conversation about gender ideology.

Social Media, Consumer Data, and the Changing Spaces of Consumption

Today, advertising has taken advantage of media’s porousness, seeping into our online space and time in all manner of formats. Although ads and marketing are not all visual, visibility and the field of the gaze are crucial terrains for digital media advertisers and marketing researchers who seek to maximize their reach. Brands are everywhere on our screens and in public space. We don’t just look at them, we move amidst them. They are part of the structure of our built environments and the virtual spaces of our computer screens. Yet we become inured to advertisements and related brand messages, tuning them out selectively or absentmindedly clicking and swiping them away. We have learned to ignore the flashing pop-up with its intrusive sounds. But even these strategies have their limits. Our everyday actions of swiping away or ignoring a pop-up are tracked and studied by marketing experts, who use algorithms to track our moves and habits during our time online, documenting and statistically analyzing what we tend to linger over and what we tend to push away. Thus, our feed may be customized to better match our tastes, and graphic designers respond to our responses to make informed decisions about what types of images and techniques are more likely to catch and hold our attention. Visibility is not just a quality of the advertising image; it is also a central aspect of the field’s way of knowing and changing its techniques and methods.

The spaces of consumerism are also changing. Earlier in this chapter we described the window-lined, glass-roofed pedestrian arcades of nineteenth-century Paris, the palatial urban department stores of early twentieth-century London, and the cavernous shopping malls of the late twentieth-century global metropolis—all sites where the shopper has engaged in mobile visual consumption, walking through architectural spaces to window shop. Big-box retailers continue to thrive along with department stores, arcades, and smaller brick-and-mortar boutiques and shops. However, these forms all now vie with online retail sites. Introduced in the 1990s, online shopping ostensibly eliminated the need for retail space overhead. Even those retailers that continue to operate physical stores have embraced online stores, which have become necessary components of selling. Moreover, online vendors such as

Amazon also require brick-and-mortar spaces for inventory and distribution, though they are often kept well out of view of the consumer. In 2015, Amazon was the world's largest online retailer. It maintained eighty warehouses, dubbed "fulfillment centers," near key shipping hubs around the world, with some of these facilities taking up more than 1.2 million square feet of physical space. The news photographer Geoff Robinson documented the heightened activity at some of these centers just prior to Black Friday, the official beginning of the Christmas shopping rush when one-day sales attract crowds that have in some cases become dangerously competitive. To avoid the scene, some consumers shop Black Friday deals online. It is easy to see from this image that, although hidden from the consumer, human labor and physical space, whether in the store or storage, remain the cornerstones of consumption in "virtual" shopping.



FIG. 7.29

Amazon fulfillment center, Nov. 25, 2014, from series by Geoff Robinson documenting centers in Peterborough and Cambridgeshire, United Kingdom

In 2015, Amazon opened its first brick-and-mortar retail book store in Seattle. The store resembles neither the older global chains such as Barnes & Noble nor the highly curated independent bookstores such as San Francisco's City Lights. Perhaps Amazon is taking a lesson from newer commerce arrangements such as sharing economies, collaborative consumption venues like food co-ops, DIY and independent designer venues, pop-up stores, trunk shows, and street fairs—all forms that are thriving in physical space. Yet all of these physical commercial outlets require a social media presence to survive, if only so that consumers can find their locations on GPS. Technology has transformed production, inventory management, shopping transactions, data collection, and the circulation of brand messages. This culture is pervasively visual, from the representation of objects for sale to the design of brand culture—the broader lifestyle that the brand enhances and creates.

New shopping spaces also replace older ones. Between 1956 and 2005, 1,500 malls were built in the United States, some with more than a million square feet of retail space. By 2014 fewer than 1,000 malls remained. When not razed, the shells of dead malls are repurposed as medical centers, gyms, and churches or become illicit shelters for homeless people, partying teenagers, and opportunistic plants and wildlife. Although many of the vast suburban malls and central city department

stores have closed, brick-and-mortar-style stores continue to thrive as big box stores, as the success of chains such as Costco and Wal-Mart demonstrates.

Most brands are now global, with a significant number of brand stores franchised globally. With the rise of social media, H&M, a Swedish chain with a strong presence in London since the late 1970s, became a major global fashion retailer catering to youth with a keen urban fashion sense. H&M opened thousands of brick-and-mortar stores throughout Europe, the United States, the Middle East, and Asia after 1998, when the first store in France was opened. By 2016, the chain had 3,900 stores in sixty-one markets worldwide. Social media has helped to make brand identification a global phenomenon without eliminating the pleasures of local experience by promoting the experience of brand shopping in stores as a feature of leisure and travel culture. We can experience the look and feel of H&M London, or of H&M Tokyo, Cairo, or Mexico City, and tweet about it. Global consumerism thus entails homogenization at the same time that it offers individualized options in shopping location and style.

On the one hand, these global brands can be seen as homogenizing forces, selling the same tastes and styles throughout diverse cultures. On the other hand, how these brands have been consumed in different cultures varies a great deal. One consequence of the signification of global U.S. brands as the most symbolic sites of U.S. capitalism has been that they have been the targets of protests. Starbucks, with over 23,000 stores in 2016, is a worldwide symbol of the power of global brands. In fact, it often establishes itself at some of the most symbolic sites of culture, like the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. Yet, as a global brand, Starbucks has been the target of protests in countries such as Lebanon, Israel, and New Zealand. Local resistance to Starbucks, including consumer boycotts of their products, has been prompted by the company's practice of occupying sites left vacant by locally run coffee shops whose owners could no longer pay

the inflated rents that a large chain could easily manage. Resistance to global brands can also be seen in the creation of counter-brands that play off the logo of the original brand and offer themselves as politically viable substitutes. For instance, Mecca Cola, which was launched in France in 2002, borrows the traditional red logo of Coca-Cola, with script that implies Arabic lettering, to sell itself as the anti-U.S. cola brand. The label of the Mecca Cola bottle asks consumers to "buvez engage," or drink with commitment.

As the advertising and promotion industries and consumers have moved from established advertising and marketing models to brand cultures, these industries have restructured their strategies, values, and business models. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Foursquare, and the emergence of smartphones as a primary venue for entertainment media, have

FIG. 7.30
Mecca Cola



effectively rearranged the terrain of consumerism. The mobile phone consumer who moves through the world of online browsing and networks is a contemporary version of the nineteenth-century window shopper who strolled the Paris Arcades, looking at products in the windows of the new modern stores, or the twentieth-century automobile driver who motored past advertising billboards on the highway.

The emergence of digital technology has been the key factor in this dramatic transformation of the advertising industry, in particular the ways that digital technology enables online tracking and facilitates the collection of vast amounts of data. Digital technology has been crucial to the management of large amounts of inventory, enabling the vast and rapid distribution systems that undergird retailers like WalMart and distributors like FedEx. Yet its most powerful impact has been transforming consumer marketing from models of large demographic categories to an increasingly customized profile of the consumer of one. Marketers now have the capacity to track consumers through a broad array of electronic modes, from their social media actions to their purchases (via credit card tracking, required registrations, and the use of discount store cards) and through their Google searches, all of which is monetized within marketing domains. As consumers, we are constantly profiled by marketers, who use large data informatics to customize their messages and to sell seemingly without “selling.” These transactions raise many privacy issues. Key here is the way that we are encouraged to give up privacy for convenience, particularly in online consumption. Online purchasing is made significantly more efficient and convenient if we allow ourselves to be tracked and monitored. As Joseph Turow has written, the roots of this can be traced to Netscape’s 1990s development of the “cookie,” which allows websites to place a small text file on users’ computers.²⁸ This user individualization means that websites recognize users on a particular computer, which allows users to not have to re-enter information each time. This convenience became quickly embedded in browsers and is the origin of online customization that now allows programs and apps to track our movements online.

Consider the forms of surveillant looking in data tracking. As we discussed in Chapter 3, in the panopticon “watching” involved no single individual actually looking at any given time but instead entailed a technology of unmanned observation. Algorithms are similarly “unmanned” forms of data tracking and collection, if not strictly forms of “looking” in the literal sense of seeing by eye. When algorithms designed to track our browsing and clicking habits and our eye movements are computed to generate data about our patterns and habits, that data is computed to optimize strategies for marketing to us as individuals. There is no literal “looking,” yet information is highly customized to reflect our personal tastes. Practices of looking *at* looking thus have become a significant aspect of the advertising and marketing research field. This kind of looking is displaced

onto a computational process and is not an embodied act. Surveillance, we may surmise, is very much about the field of the gaze but is not solely or always a visual modality.

Nicole Cohen argues that this has spurred a “valorization of surveillance.” She writes, “positioned in terms of the valorization of surveillance and the commodification of user information, social media cannot be understood outside of the broader context of capital accumulation in a digital age, where the relentless drive to accumulate and to rationalize production has moved online.”²⁹ The high value of companies such as Google and Facebook is derived from their capacity to collect and analyze vast amounts of user data, which they then sell to marketers. The stakes these companies have in being the primary user portal to online activity is quite high, because their business model depends on their capacity to have the actions of users within their gaze. Facebook syndicates its features well beyond its platform, and Google, as commonly noted by technology commentators, knows more about us than we probably want to imagine.

The knowing consumer, who is tracked and monitored and who knows the codes of advertising messages, is increasingly less receptive to advertising messages. Advertising and marketing have thus migrated to the world of brand culture and to forms of viral and guerrilla marketing that aim to sell brands and products without appearing to be selling. This is related to product placement, which also integrates brands into popular culture (in particular film and television) in “seamless” ways that look like content rather than advertising. These “stealth” strategies have developed with the increased flow of social media consumer messages. The concept of “guerrilla” marketing borrows its language from the history of political movements that use unconventional warfare and surprise attacks to achieve their goals. Guerrilla marketers pay people to recommend drinks while at a bar or to extol the virtues of cameras while pretending to be tourists. Viral marketing deploys the meme networks through which people pass on ideas to their friends. These strategies began initially as ways of creating clever content that would attract attention online. Such marketing has now become extremely effective in disseminating messages (designed to not look like marketing) via online social networks.

Many technology scholars see these new kinds of consumer–brand relationships as forms of a new kind of capitalism, what Jodi Dean terms “communicative capitalism,” defined in many ways by networked technologies. Communicative capitalism is fueled by the ideology of participation at work in social media.³⁰ Social media, like the Internet and the web more broadly, was developed initially out of values of community, participation, and networking that were idealistically more about human interaction than about finance and capital. As Cohen writes, social media are sites where the “spirit of access, interactivity, and participation is harnessed and capitalized on, creating surplus value for corporations.”³¹

These online interactions constitute a new kind of consumer, often referred to as a prosumer (producer-consumer), as well as new forms of labor. When users post, like, share, and circulate brand messages, they are actually doing the work of brand managers, and their value is gauged according to their capacity to sell. They do not receive this value themselves. Rather, it is quantified through data analysis and sold by social media and tech companies such as Google to marketers. The consumer's value is constituted in this system not only through their actual purchase of a product or service but through their activity that can help a brand become popular and cool.

Some brands have actively involved consumers in the ad-making process, with certain brands capitalizing on consumer videos to sell their products in action. Most visible of these is GoPro, the camera designed for action filming that can be attached to someone in motion or used underwater. GoPro began marketing by giving its camera to athletes and collecting user-generated content to sell its brand. Hundreds of amateur user-created videos made with the camera have been used by the company to market the brand, and it is now using that content to sell licensed videos to other brands. This kind of consumer “engagement” has long been sought by brand managers, as it indicates a deep level of investment, emotional and financial, in a brand, and consumers may effectively replace the production teams that would otherwise be hired to produce commercials.



FIG. 7.31

Screen shot from *Tula catches some big air*, shot by Bob Ward on a GoPro camera, from GoPro.com website, 2016

DIY Culture, the Share Economy, and New Entrepreneurism

The new spaces of consumerism contrast, as we noted, with nineteenth- and twentieth-century consumer spaces. Large retailers today, such as Wal-Mart, also provide a sharp contrast architecturally, aesthetically, and design-wise to the department stores of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which were designed to give consumers an aesthetic, if not luxurious, experience. Big box stores are, by contrast, aesthetically closer to warehouses in their design, with stripped-down interiors and industrial shelves that are meant to signify low prices, the ability to acquire



FIG. 7.32

Sleep Bedder, a sustainable goods retail and events space in San Diego operated by alternative entrepreneur Sonia Weksler

vast numbers of globally produced goods in bulk, and a do-it-yourself consumerism (with little service help in choosing goods).

Yet alternative spaces of consumerism, such as this retail eco-friendly mattress store Sleep Bedder, which also serves as a gallery for goods made by local artisans, a yoga studio, and a community meeting space, are on the rise. The community-based shop specializing in locally produced goods offers an alternative to the oversized, impersonal spaces and global brands of the big box store.

Ephemeral spaces of consumerism such as pop-up stores and restaurants have become more popular as well. These kinds of enterprises gain attention through social media. The early 2000s saw a notable upsurge of independent retailers specializing in handmade and vintage or upcycled goods. The success

of these ventures rests not on some hoped-for corporate buyout but on the identification of alternative local, global, and transcultural markets for those who seek out independent labels and products as a matter of personal aesthetics and a politics of consumption that favors small business, shopping locally or globally within niche taste cultures, and an artisanal scale of production. Etsy, a peer-to-peer ecommerce business site founded in 2005, is a particularly successful example of this trend. This new commerce model promotes a culture in which the boundaries between the global and the local, and between the consumer and the producer, are fluid. Though a global marketplace, Etsy offers an app for shopping locally.

Etsy and similar forums derive from a DIY (do-it-yourself) culture that has emerged as an alternative to consumer culture. The DIY production culture is related to the rise of consumer exchange networks that replicate barter systems, such as eBay and Craigslist, networks that allow people to sell goods to each other directly, eliminating retailers. These kinds of consumer exchanges thrive through networked technologies, which make online consumption reliable and relatively secure. Although eBay began as an online auction site in 1995, its goods are now primarily sold through its “buy it now” feature. Although many stores use these networks, most of the exchange that takes place on them is through small businesses and individuals who negotiate with each other directly. The neoliberal model of the local brick-and-mortar store or restaurant with its local craft products and homey feel, run by a businessperson who is perhaps also a personal friend on Facebook, is increasingly a common feature of the large city. These businesses are perceived by

consumers as alternatives to the chain and big box stores with discounted prices but also questionable labor practices and environmentally unfriendly products.

These trends intersect with the emergence of the share economy. Airbnb, founded in 2008, follows a neoliberal alternative business model that combines authenticity with thriftiness, hominess, and global community. The company bills itself as a “trusted community marketplace” for people to list and book lodging around the world. The roles of service provider and consumer are flexible and reciprocal: Airbnb users—or, rather, “members” of the Airbnb community—may occupy either or both sides of that relationship. The experience is structured so that the role of the business itself is discrete and minimal. Though the site is clearly branded with a look, a vibe, and a culture, Airbnb serves as the near-silent steward or mediator of a transaction that takes place directly between community members. Airbnb’s corporate owners take in return a small fee for their service. Nevertheless, Airbnb has come under fire for its role in helping to sustain high rents in cities such as San Francisco and for being a marketplace for apartment managers rather than friendly renters and home owners.

A crucial component of this new trust and share economy is its review culture, which has become a source of informal advertising on which businesses are increasingly reliant. A business like Uber can only operate successfully if it provides a platform for trust, and this comes through user-consumers providing reviews for free. Within moments of stepping out of the car, an Uber rider is prompted to rate the driver. Those reviews build user trust and create an image of the service as continually vetted. Here again, we can see how consumers are asked to provide unpaid labor insofar as these reviews are essentially the advertising used by the service to generate its own reputation.

A strong characteristic of twenty-first-century brand culture is the shift from goods to services as the central commodity. Sharing economies are primarily based on services and the experience of that service, even if goods are exchanged. As Lilly Irani and M. Six Silberman have noted, these service economies are highly touted by corporations such as Amazon, which serves as the broker for the popular Mechanical Turk, a service connecting clients needing quick freelance labor to “immaterial laborers” who perform these tasks for a negotiated fee.³² This “immaterial” labor is of course no less material and embodied than the labor of the nineteenth-century factory worker or the twentieth-century domestic worker. The service is perceivable as

FIG. 7.33

A freelance online worker transcribing a phone conversation of an insurance claim at her home in Mountain View, California, on April 23, 2012



“immaterial” and “digital” only insofar as the transaction is contracted online and the service may be performed behind the scenes, out of view of the client, often in a space other than their home or office. Turkopticon is a web platform designed by Silberman and Irani as an intervention in the online service economy that turns consumer ratings to different ends.³³ Freelance workers who offer their service labor to employers through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk may register on Turkopticon to post ratings for individual employers’ work practices, to report about their experiences as employees, and to read postings by other freelance employees about their experiences with a given employer before accepting a job. Irani, as well as Neda Atanasoski and Kalindi Vora, have noted that it is often women, specifically women of color, who perform this behind-the-screens, so-called “immaterial” digital labor on a freelance or outsourced basis.³⁴

These new models of consumerism suggest that the rulebooks of advertising and marketing, as well as the playbooks of consumer culture, were rewritten in the twenty-first century with social media’s rise. A dramatic restructuring of most major industries, from the entertainment industry to publishing to retail to marketing, has been wrought by the Internet, digital media, networked and mobile technologies, and new modes of communication. The idea that consumers, as viewers, make meaning and influence value may be seen as a symptom of a troubling global trend toward the fallacy that increased choice means greater freedom for all of us in the world. The question remains, *who* is granted choice, and what does it mean to make meaning through consumption? The brokering of meaning through making our own images and media texts is enmeshed in an ethos of neoliberal agency that feeds back into an economy in which the number of people who are poor continues to rise and wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the 1 percent.

Notes

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3. Ibid.
4. Banet-Weiser, *Authentic™*, 4.
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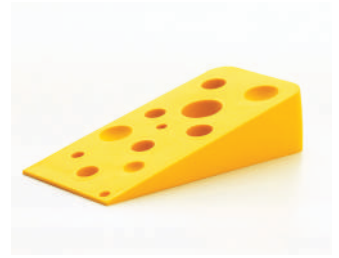
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Postmodernism: Irony, Parody, and Pastiche

the world we live in is defined by paradoxes, contradictions, and the coexistence of incommensurable cultures. We have discussed how the historical framework of modernity gave rise to urban centers, the mobility of daily life, mass industrialization, and a set of modern values and worldviews that continue to this day, including an embrace of individuality and technological progress. Yet there are many qualities and aspects of contemporary life that are distinct from the experience of modernity, in particular the ways in which people are comfortable today experiencing life and social connectivity in virtual modes and spaces, and the complex ways in which self-consciousness, reflexivity, and irony have come to permeate many aspects of culture. In many societies, with active Internet use and postindustrialization, there are aspects of contemporary life that seem to move past, question, and play with the values and styles of modernity, aspects called postmodern. This includes the ease with which we interact in simulated environments; the jaded sense that everything has been done before; a preoccupation with remakes, remixes, appropriations, and pastiche; and a view of the body as a physically malleable form.

This intermix of the modern and the postmodern shapes the contradictions of the world today. Yet this experience varies a great deal. Although people in many parts of the world communicate and experience social connections through communication technologies in virtual spaces, a significant amount of the world population continues to live in conditions (rural and isolated) that could be characterized as premodern, and there are parts of the world that are ideologically quite resistant to the project of modernity.

It is important, therefore, to note from the outset that we do not live in a world that is completely postmodern. One of the failures of early theorizations of

postmodernism, which began in the 1980s, was the characterization of the postmodern worldview that made it seem universal, thus seeming to erase and negate these competing experiences and worldviews. We live in a world that is rural, industrial, and postindustrial, in which many of the qualities that characterized modernity (for example, the acceleration of time and compression of space that resulted from urbanization, industrialization, and automation) have become conditions in postmodernity alongside and in relation to virtual technologies and the flows of capital, information, and media in the era of globalization.

The rise of postmodern styles and sensibilities that began in late twentieth-century art, popular culture, architecture, and advertising has intersected in recent decades with new modes of culture and economics, fueled largely by digital technologies and social media. This has enabled new kinds of cultural production, distribution, and consumption that defy the structures of the culture industry that were so dominant in the twentieth century. Independent media economics and alternative forms of culture share with postmodern styles new ways of addressing viewers, new cultural modes and forms, new integrations with brand culture, and new cultural experiences.

Postmodernity/Postmodernism

Engagement with postmodernity and postmodernism began in the 1980s, after the publication of *The Postmodern Condition*, a book by French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard.¹ Scholars took up these concepts to better understand and describe the changing conditions of knowledge and human subjectivity in the late twentieth century, at the end of the modern industrial age. This was a period of escalating globalization, computerization, and information technologies. The grand narratives of Enlightenment progress that dominated modernity were destabilized. Thrown into flux were ideals that had grounded Enlightenment thought, including universal truth, the concept of a unified self, positivist science, and foundationalism (the theory that beliefs can be justified on basic grounds of certainty, such as reason). In Lyotard's view, the problem was not that modernity's truths could be proven false. Rather, he criticized the very quest for truth. Scholars turned to a concept of postmodernity to describe the late twentieth-century episteme, and to grasp the escalation of contingency and change in a world increasingly characterized by mobility, transformation, fragmentation, and a multiplicity of beliefs and experiences. Put into question were truth claims, foundations (such as the belief in a universal god, or hard scientific facts), and totalizing theories (in which a single theory or interpretation tries to capture all the facets of a work, or a political movement).

Postmodernity names the historical period after World War II, especially the changes occurring after 1968. We have noted that modernity refers to a historical period characterized by industrialization, an emphasis on science as a means of achieving universal human progress, and an ethos of progress and freedom

associated with Enlightenment philosophy and political thought. Postmodernity describes a period characterized by a more skeptical view of science and technology, an outlook generated by the Holocaust and the nuclear bombing of Japan in World War II. These events showed how progress in “pure” scientific research could be turned against humankind and used to perform previously unthinkable acts of violence and destruction. Postmodernity is also tied to recognition of the irony of global trade liberalization in a world that is becoming increasingly uneven in its distribution and flow of resources, money, and goods. Thinkers such as David Harvey have characterized postmodernism as an economic, post-Fordist (postindustrial) culture of flexible accumulation, relating this to a time-space compression “that has a disorienting and disruptive impact upon political-economic practices, the balance of class power, as well as upon cultural and social life.”² Harvey’s work has been influential in framing the “postmodern condition” within material and economic circumstances such as the deployment of new organizational forms and new production technologies, the acceleration of production and distribution, global labor outsourcing from the West to Asia and the Global South, the use of new technologies to concentrate power, and the acceleration of production and consumption in economies that are shifting their bases from goods to services.

As we have noted, there is no precise moment of rupture between the modern and the postmodern. Rather, postmodernity intersects with and permeates late modernity, creating a context in which Enlightenment notions of liberalism, modernization, and progress continue to compel development models in the Global South. The scientific and medical fields continue to invoke modernist approaches based on scientific truth and technological advancement, in defiance of the postmodern turn. There are, however, multiple aspects of postmodernity that distinguish it from modernity. Modern thought was characterized by a sense of knowing that was forward-looking and positivistic, embracing the new and promulgating the belief that one could know what is objectively true and real—by, for example, discerning and exposing the structures that underpin social formations and natural phenomena, as structuralist theory did. In contrast, postmodern thought is characterized by the questioning of the supposed universality of structural knowledge, as well as skepticism about modern belief in progress: Is “progress” always toward something better? For whom is any given instance of “progress” better? Can we really know the human subject? How can truth be pure or unmediated? If we acknowledge that all knowable truth is mediated, then is truth’s basis in representation or simulation? Embracing postmodern thought entails profoundly questioning the foundations of truth that shore up our knowledge of social structures and our means of producing knowledge about social relations and culture.

For these reasons, some theorists describe postmodernism as skepticism about “master narratives” or “metanarratives”—narratives that reputedly reveal the structural basis of all narrative systems. A master narrative is a framework that purports to explain the structural basis of society, the economy, or world itself, for example,

in comprehensive, formal, and universalizing terms. Religion, science, Marxism, psychoanalysis, Enlightenment notions of progress, and other theories that set out to explain all facets of life in a totalizing way are master narratives or metanarratives. When we engage in metanarratives, we are engaging in the belief that we can know something at its core—the basis of emancipation or self-knowledge, for example, or the root cause of an epidemic. Lyotard famously characterized postmodern theory as a condition of being profoundly skeptical of metanarratives.³ Postmodern theorists examine the foundational philosophical concepts that were previously perceived as beyond question, such as the ideas of value, order, presence, control, identity, centralized power, and meaning itself. Again, the objective of postmodern thought is not to reveal the false basis of any given metanarrative, but to grasp the relativism, instability, and contingency of each system in its various forms (a building, a book, a theory of contagion, or a work of art). Postmodern critics have thus critically examined social institutions, including the media, the university and academic disciplines, the museum, the practices of science and medicine, and the law. Such critics engage with, re-evaluate, and sometimes even restage the complex and often contradictory beliefs and systems through which those institutions operate. The objective of postmodern practice is not to reveal the baselessness of high modernist notions of mastery and universalism, but to restage and recombine the structures and effects of given systems, which are often revealed to be impure, chimeric, and complexly tied into other areas of culture and knowledge.

In 1991, literary scholar Fredric Jameson used the term *postmodern* to describe the postwar “cultural logic of late capitalism.” Jameson emphasized the formative role of changing economic and political conditions such as globalization, emerging information technologies, and flexible forms of production in shaping the styles and practices of art, media, and popular culture. Jameson described postmodernism as a turn in art, philosophy, and architecture toward recognition of the value and meaning of mass media, popular culture, and everyday culture and design. Under the ethos of postmodernism, artistic practice has become more distributed and open in its ties to other domains of knowledge and culture. Postmodernist practitioners emphasize mediation and structural instability, questioning the idea that there is a singular modern subject or essence of humanity, and acknowledging the relativity, situatedness, and messy indeterminacy of human experience.

To understand this turn, it is helpful to recall high modernism’s emphasis on innovation and pure knowledge. This appeared in postwar movements such as abstract expressionism in painting, with its focus on the pure medium (paint, canvas) and the painter’s gestural activity as the essence of painting. In modern architecture, the International Style was advocated by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, who were influenced by the German Bauhaus form-as-function approach of the 1920s and 1930s. Bauhaus designers and architects embraced the utopian idea that unadorned form was universally relevant and meaningful and showed disdain for vernacular styles and decoration. Architects such as Johnson

took this approach into the realm of corporate architecture from the 1950s through the 1970s, designing enormous towers of glass and steel stripped of conventional adornment to signify high culture. Critics like Jameson noted that this approach to the built environment was implicitly elitist in its view of universally relevant structures designed by enlightened practitioners; he noted that the high modernist approach, lauded before World War II for its potential relevance to the masses, had come by the 1970s to signify the exploitative corporate culture of industrial capitalism.⁴

In the mid-to-late twentieth century, modernism's codes and conventions become signifiers of corporate wealth. Many writers, artists, and architects became disillusioned with modernist principles. These practitioners turned to vernacular design, pictorial style, decoration, and the tactic of making do with what is at hand (copying, appropriating) used outside the domain of "educated" high art and culture. The vernacular—in all of its periods of expression—became an open resource for inspiration. By self-consciously and ironically turning their backs on high art and pure knowledge, postmodernists embraced instead the vernacular, decoration, kitsch, the quotidian, and "mere" style. They were not so much repudiating modernist ideals, but rather expressing disgust with modernism's depoliticization and its emergence as a signifier of elitism.

Appropriation, bricolage, and the culture of using and valuing copies are all characteristic elements of postmodern everyday practice and artistic strategies. In their 1972 book *Learning from Las Vegas*, architects Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour insist that architects must be more attentive to the tastes and styles characterizing the spaces that are truly enjoyed by the masses in their everyday lives. They turn their attention away from the glass and steel towers of high modernism and toward the kitschy hotels and fast-food joints that lined the Las Vegas strip. Their classic example is a shed used as a restaurant on top of which was constructed an enormous duck—the epitome of tacky, cheap design, appropriation of symbolism, and playful quotidian engagement with decoration.

Following Venturi, many architects began to embrace popular conventions and styles, introducing stylistic elements such as decorative cornices and facades that directly and ironically referenced other architectural periods. They foreground the importance of architectural history,

FIG. 8.1

Denise Scott Brown in Las Vegas,
1968





FIG. 8.2

AT&T building, 1984 (now 550 Madison Avenue), New York, designed by Philip Johnson

as not something we must study for new knowledge, but something which we must acknowledge, enjoy, and embrace in its role creating the signifiers that inform our everyday experience of the built environment. Hidden structure in itself is not the only important aspect of meaning and experience, this strategy suggested.

A building in midtown Manhattan designed by Philip Johnson and John Burgee in 1984, 550 Madison Avenue (formerly the AT&T building) is a classic example of the postmodern mixing of semiotic elements to emphasize the importance of design as a signifying activity. The Johnson and Burgee structure was built amidst a sea of modern glass and steel office buildings, and for almost all of its thirty-seven stories it is consistent with its modernist architectural context. (That it is currently being converted into a high-priced condo building exemplifies the global postindustrial economy with its intersections of covert global capital, high finance, and real estate development as well.) However, its façade is rendered in vast sheets of gaudy pink granite, and at the very top of the building, visible to all who view the iconic New York skyline, is a hilarious flourish: an ornamental pediment that looks like the well-known decorative outline of a Chippendale cabinet top.

To understand the flourish's ironic humor and politics, it helps to know a little about Chippendale as a style. Thomas Chippendale was an English furniture maker who produced Rococo and neoclassical furniture in mid-1700s London, at the start of the Industrial Revolution.

His styles were widely embraced by the emerging wealthy class of industrialists, gentlemen who appreciated the sensibility of this “gentleman cabinetmaker,” as Chippendale billed himself in a book he wrote for his clients and peers. In the nineteenth century, his furniture styles were copied around the world for the rising managerial class, becoming symbols of an emerging middle class. The style’s name was revived to describe mass-manufactured versions of the coveted English antiques. Chippendale thus was a multi-generational signifier of genteel Anglo wealth throughout modernity. Its brand status as a sign of classical taste lives

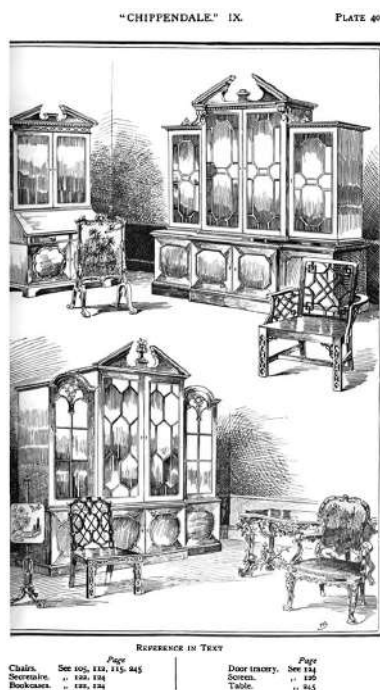


FIG. 8.3

Chippendale furniture illustration by W. C. Baldock for *Style in Furniture* by R. Davis Benn, 1920

on. Items such as the Chippendale couch, with its iconic curved top, and the Chippendale china cabinet, its keyhole top replicated in the AT&T building's pediment, are still popular in furniture manufactured for middle-class homeowners aspiring to own furniture with the look and feel of antiques, but at a more modest cost. The presence of this “classy” furniture in a nightclub featuring male erotic dancers led to the use of “Chippendales” as a brand name for a male erotic dancing troupe in the 1970s that is currently a Vegas-based touring revue show. The word has become synonymous with the culture of male erotic revues meant for women spectators. The appropriation of the Chippendale form for the corporate-power skyline of New York was also an ironic poke at modernity's high culture for its associations with ornate bad taste, its cheesy underside, and its enduring signifier as a “gentleman's” world. This penchant for quotation, and appropriating, copying, and embracing the vernacular is captured in the work of companies that manufacture replicas of famous buildings for hobbyist collectors.⁵



FIG. 8.4

Chippendales dancer on Fremont Street in downtown Las Vegas, 2016, photograph by Yvette Cardozo

Simulation and the Politics of Postmodernity

A key aspect of postmodernism is the turn from the copy and representation to simulation. French philosopher Jean Baudrillard introduced this concept of simulation as a central aspect of postmodern thought in his 1981 work *Simulacra and Simulation*.⁶ Baudrillard described the collapse between counterfeit and real and between the original and the copy which was then taking place in a culture increasingly organized around media and digital ways of knowing, and communicating and experiencing the world as a domain of signs and information flows. Baudrillard noted an important distinction between the processes of representation and simulation. A representation stands in for or provides data about something that pre-exists it, something that we understand to be real and which we hold in our minds as the source of a copy. The real, in this view, precedes the copy; without the pre-existence or mental concept of this real, there is no representation. Simulation entails a process wherein the model of the real, the simulacrum, may precede the real itself. Simulation is the process by which an action or process is imitated, but a simulacrum is the actual substitution for the real, a substitution that in effect calls into question the real. The simulacrum requires no pre-existing real. It may in fact transform what we might call the real, or bring it about.



FIG. 8.5
World Park in Beijing, China

For example, theme parks often contain simulations of sites that exist elsewhere in the real world. Beijing's World Park provides visitors with simulated experiences of famous sites from around the world: Egypt's great pyramids, Michelangelo's David, and Manhattan's skyline can be experienced inside the park. Simulated sites and environments are designed to make visitors feel as if they are immersed in the real place. Most of the people who work in and visit these models of world landmarks will never take an actual

trip to the real place. Few can afford it. The simulacra thus serve as the basis for knowledge and experience of place and history, lending the real place importance from afar. A visit to a simula-

crum may play a major role in generating local and global cultural knowledge of the meaning and value of a faraway place. "The global" takes on new meaning when simulation of a culture is legitimated as a substitute for real experience. If you have been to Main Street USA at Disneyland, Baudrillard suggests, you do not need to go to the real world equivalent, for we live in an information culture where simulation more often than not is a perfectly acceptable basis for knowledge. A gondola ride at the Venetian resort in Las Vegas is not a mere representational substitute or pale version of the real thing. It becomes an experience that reshapes the meaning of Venice and its canals as lucrative signifiers of a twenty-first-century global vision of romantic tourism, during an era in which flooding and sinking are eroding the historic city. The simulacrum functions as pure signifier, with no need for recourse to a "real" signified. The point is not that we have lost touch with the real, but that media and information technologies have taken precedence over the real in defining what is legitimate and valuable experience. The United States is paradigmatic of a global culture of looking practices ruled by simulacra, diminishing the significance and value of the real in an economy of hypermediation, and substituting simulacra for the real in an economy that privileges information. The idea is not that representation ceases to exist or is replaced by simulation, but that the mode of simulation came to take precedence over representation as an important aspect of knowing and experiencing the world in postmodernity.

Baudrillard also introduced the concept of the hyperreal, a condition offered by experience in a world in which simulacra take precedence over the real. The hyperreal is a condition generated by the escalation of the design model—not the copy, but the simulation that precedes the real—as the locus of value and meaning. The

real may remain imagined or speculative. The hyperreal is not just the effect of a good copy that makes us believe it is the real; it is the experience of a simulacrum, which requires no recourse to an original and which may serve as the model for the real. In the era of the hyperreal—that is, the era of digitization and an emerging information economy—Baudrillard predicted that simulacra would come to precede the real and become a condition for its production. He did not bemoan the loss of the real, but rather warned ironically of the condition of living in a state of constant mediation.

Image culture is crucial to Baudrillard's concepts of simulacra and the hyperreal. Images fascinate us, he explained, "not because they are sites of the production of meaning and representation," but "because they are sites of the *disappearance* of meaning and representation, sites in which we are caught quite apart from any judgment of reality."⁷ In this foregrounding of image culture, style emerges as a key characteristic of the postmodern. Whereas in modernity structure and form constituted the basis for knowledge and truth, in postmodernity style and surface reign. Postmodernism is an ethos, a set of sensibilities, and a politics of cultural experience and production in which style and image predominate. This is why postmodernism is a useful framework for thinking about contemporary political culture, for example, the manner in which politicians produce themselves as style, generating identities as simulacra—hyperreal identities which come about not through representations of an actual life lived but through media images and texts that often have no recourse to a real person. The point is not that the real person does not exist, but that the real of the person's life is forged through images, brands, and styles.

Postmodernism entails an ironic acceptance of one's own immersion in—indeed, one's production as a human subject through—mass, low, or popular culture. This contrasts with modernism's opposition to mass culture and the saturation of the world with images, indeed a making of the world through images. One signpost of the difference between a modernist and a postmodernist critical sensibility is the acknowledgment within the latter that we cannot occupy a position outside of that which we analyze, or outside the ideological context in which we live; we cannot get beneath the surface to find something more real or more true. Part of this has to do with refusing the binary between inside and outside. To be a critic of capitalist class politics, we must acknowledge that we are constituted within that class system, rather than presume that we might stand outside it as observing critic, or as oppositional outsider who refuses its conventions and laws. We may very well stand against them, but we are never truly outside the systems we interrogate as critics. Though we may be constituted as outsiders through that system, that very structure of being positioned outside may in fact shore up the system itself. A good example is the human subject of colonialism, who is constituted as the Other whose existence shores up the image of power and authority of the colonizer. Postmodernism complicates the divisions between inside and outside, between high

and low culture, and between elite and mass consciousness. Thus, brand culture is distinctly postmodern in its production of the human subject in and through the images, products, and imagined lifestyles offered through the mediation of brands. As we noted in Chapter 7, there is no getting “outside” or above brand culture.

With its emphasis on difference (rather than universality), pluralism, and a questioning of truths, postmodernism constitutes a new form of political thinking and is not just about ironic embrace of a culture of quotation and simulation. David Harvey writes that in postmodernity we experience new and enhanced flows of communication and people, such that people are imagining new ways of making community, creating new forms of local and global involvement in humanitarian issues and social movements, and embracing new forms of cultural difference.⁸ In this optimistic view, in doing away with modernity’s master theories and master narratives, postmodernity has opened new possibilities and enabled acceptance of variety, difference, and change.

Feminist political theorist Seyla Benhabib notes that in postmodernity, the Enlightenment-based concept of man as a unified entity was widely theorized as a social, historical, and linguistic construction. In the postmodern view, the “human subject” is produced through discourse, a set of practices that include and extend beyond language and visual signification. To understand the human, there is no longer recourse to foundational material or metaphysical conditions of the real outside language and practice. The decentering of the Enlightenment concept of the human subject is a fundamentally postmodern turn insofar as it comes about through a rejection of the totalizing and unitary narratives of knowledge and experience that grounded modern thought. In postmodernity, the human came to be widely recognized as a political fiction that has for centuries shored up existing power dynamics. Concepts of “mankind” and “progress” have been used to privilege European, male, and white subjects over “others” who make up the differentiated and fragmented cultures and subject positions that fall outside this ideal Enlightenment figure. Benhabib’s discussion of the “demystification of the male subject of reason” is an important cornerstone of postmodern thought, illustrating how feminist interventions have informed postmodernism while also critically evaluating ongoing dynamics of male authority and vision that have continued to reappear in postmodern intellectual life. Many have asked about the stakes of ironic appropriation and rejection of foundationalism for human subjects (women, post-colonial subjects) who have never been included in the Enlightenment category of the human in the first place. The stakes in letting go of the aspiration to subjecthood are quite different for marginalized subjects.⁹

The destabilization and decentralization of such unitary and totalizing concepts is a hallmark of postmodern thought. Models for thinking through decentralized aspects have been important to the progression of postmodern intellectual and creative work. If we repudiate models that privilege progress and reason, then how do we explain (and create) action and change? Writing in the 1970s,

French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari emphasized the usefulness of the growth model of the rhizome, a term that refers to decentralized plant structures that follow a nonhierarchical pattern of growth rather than growing from a single central root. For Deleuze and Guattari, new ideas and practices sprout up in heterogeneous, decentralized ways, much as tubers or bulbs propagate, in contrast to the more centralized and orderly progression of the roots of a tree. They write that “unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point . . . it brings into play different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states. It is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple. . . . The rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots. Unlike the graphic arts, drawing, or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight.”¹⁰ This formulation remains a vital one for contemporary thought insofar as it suggests an alternative to the emphasis on appropriation and simulation as always returning to and repeating the same dynamics of the past. Although much postmodern literature suggests repetition, it is important to keep in mind that repetition also entails changes in meaning and impact, often through subtle changes in context and method and through mixing things up in ways that make structures crack open or even explode into new meanings.

Reflexivity and Distanced Knowing

Drowning Girl is a quintessentially postmodern work of Pop art painted by Roy Lichtenstein in 1963. The painting exemplifies postmodernism’s engagement with reflexive knowing in the face of modernist notions of truth, value, and meaning. Repudiating the abstract expressionist love affair with pure paint medium and raw painterly action, Lichtenstein embraced the popular medium of the comic book. It is important to note that this work is a painting, not a print. Lichtenstein appropriated the comic’s form in style only, copying the comic frame by hand to make a work of fine art replete with the text thought-bubble and graphic spots (called Ben-Day dots) common in the lowly form of the mechanically printed newspaper comic strip. His objective was not to get at the

FIG. 8.6

Roy Lichtenstein, *Drowning Girl*, 1963 (oil and synthetic polymer on canvas, 171.6 × 169.5 cm)



truth of the comic strip medium, nor to raise comics to high art, but to ironically appropriate aspects of the low culture form of comics as style in a high-art painting meant for gallery and museum showings. Like the cultural producers discussed by Jameson, Lichtenstein was interested in bringing down the “imperious gesture of the charismatic Master,” to appropriate Jameson’s phrase. Lichtenstein articulated this strategy of bringing high art down to “vulgar” bad taste quite clearly in his own words: “The colour range I use is perfect for the idea, which has always been about vulgarisation.” For Lichtenstein, the mechanical printer dots that he copied by hand are an intentionally inferior substitute for the “true” markings of fine-art painting. By projecting the original comic frame onto his canvas, choosing a new framing (he cut out some area of the original), and copying mechanically rendered shading painstakingly by hand with a paintbrush, he critiques the value and status of fine art. In his words, the dots “make the image ersatz.” In other words, they intentionally serve as a shabby stand-in for famous artists’ highly valued contemporary approaches to laying down paint on canvas. Lichtenstein’s use of print dots as a painterly style pointed presciently to the future codes and conventions of twenty-first-century information and data-driven culture: “the dots also may mean data transmission,” he speculated.¹¹

FIG. 8.7

Original DC Comics frame from “Run for Love!,” *Secret Hearts* #83, 1962, art by Tony Abruzzo (four-color process print on paper)



The source for Lichtenstein’s painting is “Run for Love!,” a story illustrated by cartoonist Tony Abruzzo for DC Comics’ *Secret Hearts* issue #83 (1949). Here, drowning Vicky is the “ugly duckling” among five sisters. In Abruzzo’s image, Vicky sinks into a wave while a young man (Mal/Brad) clings for his

own life to the side of a capsized boat. Vicky has fallen for Mal, but she is now sick of pursuing him. “I don’t care if I have a cramp,” Vicky thinks. “I’d rather sink than call Mal.” In his appropriation of the comic, Lichtenstein strips the male gaze from the frame, giving us a close-up on the teary but obstinate Vicky and removing the selfish Mal—rather than swimming to save her, he is clinging to the boat. Vicky would rather drown than call for Mal (Lichtenstein changes his name to Brad). By turning to popular culture for a cultural text about sexuality and gendered power dynamics, Lichtenstein gives us the image of a supposed “ugly duckling” who survives on her own (later in the comic), no thanks to Mal/Brad.

Many other artists, including Barbara Kruger and Dara Birnbaum, have taken up the theme of the mass-media female heroine as (anti-)

hero. In a seven-minute video titled *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (1978), Birnbaum appropriated the DC Comics superhero Wonder Woman, who we see repeatedly in a clip in which the everyday girl Diana Prince transforms from a meek, helpless secretary into the powerful female action hero. The video was rendered in postproduction with found footage, which, as art critic TJ Demos writes, moved beyond appropriation and feminist cultural critique of mass culture imagery to demonstrate the transformative potential of video as an expressive medium during the form's early years.¹² Birnbaum's *Wonder Woman* explodes with humor and irony for an audience familiar with mass culture's replication of cultural stereotypes. Its humorous critique is levied through hyperescalation of the repeating image that is the hallmark of mass culture. Postmodern

texts generally speak to viewers as subjects who are in the know about codes and conventions of representation and simulation. The dominant mode of address in postmodern texts such as Lichtenstein's *Drowning Girl* and Birnbaum's *Wonder Woman* is to a viewer who is not fooled by propaganda and illusionism, who is tired of conventions, who will get the joke, and who is media and image savvy.

These stylistic aspects point to the way in which postmodernism is often about citation or quotation. Not only do these works reference other texts, they also isolate or repeat key images or phrases by framing or cutting in, or by placing them in quotes to generate a kind of pointed, focalized, and distancing irony. As we noted earlier, postmodernism involves using mass and popular culture as a point of reference for real-life activity. Such citation also points to another central aspect of postmodernism, which is the sense that older models of addressing audiences are outdated as consumers have read and seen most everything before. Birnbaum's *Wonder Woman* underscores this experience of television and social media as repetition and a source of remaking the old into something new.

Postmodernism's reflexivity, in which the text refers to its own means of production, has its origins in modernism. In many modernist works, artists emphasized structure and form to reveal the foundational bases of genres such as narrative fiction and pictorial painting. They wanted audiences to think on a conscious level about the seductive aspects of a form. Bertolt Brecht, a German Marxist playwright and critic of the 1920s and 1930s, introduced a narrative strategy he called *distanziation*, a set of techniques designed to lead viewers to extract themselves from unconscious immersion in the world of the narrative and to break identification



FIG. 8.8

Screen shot from video *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman*, Dara Birnbaum, 1978

with the play's characters. He wanted viewers to notice how narrative strategies invite the viewer to buy into a particular ideology. Distantiation techniques in plays include having the actors step out of character to speak directly to the audience—either about their character's motivations, about their own labor as a performer, or about world issues in which the narrative is set—and structuring narrative flow in a way that interrupts the viewer's smooth engagement with fiction. In film, distantiation was practiced by having characters step out of their role and speak to the camera, by inserting mismatched cuts or jump cuts, by making visible microphones or film lighting sources, or by using camera movement to violate the 180-degree rule (which establishes the film set in a unified view by keeping the camera on one side of the action). The idea behind distantiation is that the spectator should be actively, critically, and reflexively thinking about how narrative structure lures us into ideology. Distantiation undermines the spectator's ability to unconsciously engage with the narrative and have empathy for characters, offering instead the pleasures of conscious critique and empathy with the political agenda of the director, actors, and crew as creative laborers.

One common critique of distantiation is that it kills the pleasures that people seek out and need in their art, media, and fiction. Critique, while interesting, is not in itself enough. Where do we go once we are cognizant of narrative as ideological lure? Should we reject entertainment altogether, or must it be always in the service of an anti-ideological politics? Postmodern popular culture and art take this modernist strategy of reflexivity a step further, incorporating reflexivity and distantiation into modes of entertainment. Postmodernist artists insist that we remain mired in what we critique, and for complex reasons we enjoy it despite exploitative and debasing conditions. To change the political structure of an industry or a field of practice entails engaging it from within and not standing outside it to shoot it down from an ivory tower.

Postmodern artists often use reflexivity and distancing for indirect political critique. In the early 1970s, the Los Angeles Chicano artists Harry Gamboa Jr., Patssi Valdez, Willie Herrón III, and Gronk (Glugio Nicandro) formed the art group Asco,

FIG. 8.9

Screen shot of jump cut in the film *Breathless*, dir. Jean-Luc Godard, 1960



staging performances that intervened in mainstream art and film conventions and modes of documentation. Their works included the genre of the “No Movie,” in which they performed versions of film shoots for imagined movies that were not in production and made film stills on sets that did not exist. These were sendups of industry practices, interventions that Gronk called “projecting the real by rejecting the reel.”¹³ The idea was not to fool the audience into believing the films were real, but to join with the audience in ironic criticism of the absence of Mexican-Americans in the Hollywood industry and the wider Los Angeles media and art worlds. Hollywood at that time (as it still does) included Mexican characters in films only as villains or service workers and often cast white Anglo stars (such as Charlton Heston) in Mexican roles. Then, as now, the industry employed few Mexican-Americans in positions of creative authority, despite being centered in a city with a huge Mexican-American population. The No Movie ironically protested the invisibility of Mexican stars by appropriating the film still form, making up an ironic history through simulation. This was a parody of a history that never was, and these artists engaged audiences in knowing recognition of that absence, and produced an alternative culture of art practice that engaged in the historic tradition of murals. Asco’s No Movie images and performances hilariously and incisively mocked the dream of Hollywood fame and success that defines Los Angeles.

Here, Asco members (Patssi Valdez, Gronk, Willie Herrón III, and Harry Gamboa Jr.) are positioned in what Asco called the “walking mural.” This one is titled “Asshole Mural,” a performance and photographic documentation staged in front of an unlikely landmark. They pose not before the Hollywood sign or the popular Walk of Fame, but in front of a sewer drain, a massive “asshole” from which flows the waste of the entertainment capital of the

FIG. 8.10

Asco, *Asshole Mural*, 1974; from left: Patssi Valdez, Gronk (Glugio Nicandro), Willie F. Herrón III, Harry Gamboa, Jr.



world. The implication is that Hollywood produces a lot of crap. Asco offers a sendup that invokes both the tradition of Mexican mural painting and the tourist photograph celebrating the landmarks of “Tinseltown.”

The Asco walking mural is a postmodern work with an explicit political critique that invites the viewer to reflexively critique the forms of film, tourism, and the mural. Yet the work does not jettison the “bad” forms and structures that it reveals. The viewer of the photograph is reflexively in the know that the usual setting for the mural is traditional Mexican culture (not a sewer drain) and the usual setting for the tourist photograph is a Hollywood landmark (also not a waste pipe). The performance is above all tempered with politically cutting humor about “positive” cultural imagery. In *Asshole Mural*, Asco does not simply expose the Hollywood economic or aesthetic structure as exploitative. Rather, the group mocks the very idea of structure by likening the industry itself to a waste system, which they are quite happy to memorialize in a photograph that makes the sewer a readymade icon of the modern Los Angeles minimalist art culture of the early 1970s.

Jaded Knowing and Irony

There is no new. Been there, done that. In questioning modernism’s basic tenets, postmodernist artists and critics have tended to take on a jaded, cynical, skeptical, and ironic tone. In modernity, the idea of innovation and the new as a positive, forward-thinking approach to work was powerful. But postmodernism questions the value of innovation, shrugging off its possibilities as being always contingent on the old, always partial and relative in its benefits for some constituents and not others, and always derivative of some direction of thought. Postmodernism’s irony can result in fatigue around the idea that it’s all been done before: quoting, citing, and referencing, remaking, mash-up, and the knowing address all have their limits.

In looking at how postmodern style informs popular culture, art, literature, architecture, and advertising, we can see how these forms speak to and help make new kinds of postmodern subjects. Appropriation as a political strategy can backfire. The techniques of discontinuity, reflexivity, and narrative fragmentation that were tied to political critique have become, since the late twentieth century, the primary codes of advertisers and marketers, who use these codes for intellectual play without a political message beneath the reflexive joke. In Chapter 7 we discussed the jaded, knowing consumer who enjoys commodities even as he or she realizes these goods are steeped in harmful substances, made through exploitative practices, or are unhealthy to use. We are engaged by advertisements that recognize our reflexive awareness of these conditions and which draw out the ironies of consumption to further engage us in its continuation. Appropriation can become simply reproduction—a means of extending and reproducing the same culture. How appropriation and parody can instead move rhizomatically, remaking old culture in new directions, is the key problematic of postmodernity today.

A central form through which a jaded knowing has emerged is film animation (anime) derived from Japanese manga culture. Digital animated film has a long history in Japan, the United States, and elsewhere as a form of popular culture that foregrounds simulation and the remake in works critiquing our future world. An important early example is Katsuhiro Otomo's 1988 animated feature *Akira*, which incorporates a cyberpunk technological aesthetic. Animated film became a venue for dark, dystopian, postmodern views of the future demise and collapse of modernity's industrial landscape in which we continue to live out our postmodern existences. Since this early era, manga has become a global phenomenon, and a number of globally popular films have been produced by Japanese anime directors, including Studio Ghibli's Isao Takahata (*Grave of the Fireflies* and *Pom Poko*) and Hayao Miyazaki (*My Neighbor Totoro*, *Princess Mononoko*, and *Ponyo*). Studio Ghibli has been one of the most influential sources of anime feature films appealing to a global adult and child audience and was the first in Japan to produce a computer-animated film (*Pom Poko*, 1984). *Spirited Away*, a feature anime directed by Miyazaki (who wrote the script in images, using storyboards rather than text to generate the narrative), received an Academy Award in 2003 and had enormous box office success (it is among Japan's highest grossing films ever). It remains one of the top classics of postmodern world culture. By calling the studio "postmodern," we refer to cultural production in which there is significant blurring across and fragmentation within categories such as high art and popular culture, independent and industry (mainstream) film, and "children's media" and entertainment for adults. Studio Ghibli films are widely recognized as both works of extraordinary artistry and works of popular mass culture.

There is an important social and political dimension to Japanese animation history in the postmodern period. The postmodern turn toward skepticism about scientific progress and truth was in part a response to the U.S. bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. More than 120,000 people were killed instantly in these bombings, and at least 100,000 died slow, painful deaths from radiation poisoning caused by the bombs. After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, many scientists and others no longer believed that the pursuit of pure knowledge was possible, given that science and technological research in the name of human progress had resulted in such a massive and instantaneous slaughter. At the same time, the culture of human expression in arts involving light and narrative changed dramatically as Japan and the world came to grips with the flash that destroyed so much and transformed the world and its values. In his 1995 book *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)*, film and media scholar Akira Mizuta Lippit asks: How did the atomic bomb affect visibility after World War II? Japanese animation has long negotiated this question. Consider *Barefoot Gen*, a manga series written and drawn in black and white by Keiji Nakazawa and published between 1973 and 1985, based loosely on his experience as a child survivor of Hiroshima. The series was adapted into three serial live action films by director Tengu Yamada and two serial animes by director Mori Masaki.



FIG. 8.11

Frame from *Barefoot Gen*
manga by Keiji Nakazawa,
2004



FIG. 8.12

Barefoot Gen (Hadashi no Gen),
dir. Mori Masaki, 1983

The 1983 anime depicts the bombing and its immediate aftermath in graphic pictorial detail through the eyes of a young boy, the character initially drawn by and based upon Nakazawa. He listens and watches as his father, sister, and brother burn inside the house where they are trapped by the bombing and then helps his pregnant mother give birth to a baby sister amidst unthinkable carnage. After the radioactive black rain falls, the boy and his mother become sick and weak from radiation poisoning as they eke out an existence amidst survivors in the wreckage of the city.

The drawn cartoon form makes possible a kind of visual construction of these unthinkable events that is not possible in the form of the live action film. For example, in the film we see the young boy defiantly holding aloft his newly delivered baby sister, a red radioactive plume towering behind them in a red-stained sky. His mother looks up at them in awe from under the mangled dead tree where she has just given birth. The young survivor and the newborn function as powerful regeneration symbols through the graphic use of color, composition, and framing derived from the black-and-white manga. Nakazawa and other artists who turned to the manga form during the postwar period seized a cultural tradition of Japanese drawing that predated the transforming blasts, finding that the form allowed them to work through trauma. The graphic novel and anime form provided ways of using light to negotiate what Lippitt calls the “shadow optics” of the period after the bomb. Lippitt describes the turn to an optics of “avisiuality” after the atomic blasts. Light, the medium of film and the symbol of seeing as an enlightened form of humanitarian knowledge, was revealed to be a source of devastation and destruction. Light thus is understood in a postmodern way, as a form that is not a pure source of truth but which is fragmented in its meanings and uses.

Japanese animation has had a major impact on the film market through imports and through its influence on U.S. animation styles. Pixar's *Toy Story* (1995), one of the first computer-graphics-rendered feature films, was made using computer animation techniques and styles that, like their precedents in the globally distributed Japanese animated film, appealed to both adult and child viewing audiences. Hollywood industry animations proved successful financially, beginning a trend of U.S.-produced digital animated features that cross the child–adult market. These films succeed financially in appealing to a broad viewership, while also deploying styles speaking to a new kind of postmodern viewing subject. They do this through a complex mix of conventional storytelling and layered ironic quotation referencing other cultural products.

The Lego Movie (2014) is a good example of an animated film that speaks to its viewers as knowing while engaging in ironic, politically ambiguous play. In the film's imaginary world, a Lego figure named Emmett, who has been following the corporate demand that “instructions” must be adhered to, discovers a world of resistance, including a woman ninja named Wild Style, who sees him as “the one” even though he feels ordinary. The film thus plays with cultural references (“the one” referring to the film *The Matrix*) and with the meanings of Lego itself. Following the rules versus creativity is set up as the film's narrative conflict, while it also references actual Lego toys and how they are sold. The film's stance that we must embrace creativity rather than follow instructions is ironic, given that Lego sets arrive with elaborate instructions on how to build the intended structures. While critiquing the messages of the corporate world that it profits from, the movie is also one long product placement ad for Lego: culture as brand, brand as culture.

The ways in which Lego can function as a sliding signifier across the political spectrum are evident in the controversy over Chinese artist Ai Weiwei's use of Lego sets in art. Ai is a

FIG. 8.13

Screen shot from film *The Lego Movie*, dir. Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, 2014



major figure in the Chinese art scene and has often been targeted for repression by the Chinese government. Ai has been imprisoned, placed under house arrest, and constantly surveilled, in part because of the political messages of his work and his global renown. Ai did a series of works, for instance, about the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, in which he criticized the government as responsible for many of its approximately 87,000 deaths. It is believed that over 5,000 children died in the earthquake because they were in shoddily constructed schools that collapsed. Ai began what he called a “citizen’s investigation” of the quake’s aftermath. He made a large work containing steel rebar recovered from the quake, *Wenchuan Steel Rebar* (2008–12), to commemorate those who died. He also made a large sculpture, usually exhibited on the ceiling, of a snake made from children’s backpacks. After the quake, children’s backpacks were strewn everywhere in the rubble. In this work Ai invokes them as mournful objects, yet their construction into the scaly snake also implicates China itself through the symbolic shape, since the serpent has a long history in Chinese lore.

Ai began to use Lego sets to make sculptures in part because he became fascinated by seeing his son build with them and because they were an ideal material for work when his ability to travel was restricted by the Chinese government. From

his studio in Beijing, he directed a 2014 exhibition of Lego-built portraits of prisoners of conscience (including Nelson Mandela and Edward Snowden) at the former prison at Alcatraz in San

Francisco. He states that Lego sets “are very simple and straightforward, but can also be easily destroyed and taken apart, ready to be remade and reimagined. I like the idea of using this language and material as an expression of human nature and the hand of creation.”¹⁴ Ironically, then, Lego sets’ simple construction, their status as toys, and their flexibility as artistic material made them ideal for Ai.

Yet, in October 2015, the Lego Group denied Ai the right to order Lego sets in bulk for an Australian exhibition on free speech, stating that it could not approve the use of Lego sets for political works. Ai posted on Instagram, “As a powerful corporation, Lego is an influential cultural and political actor in the globalized economy with questionable values. Lego’s refusal to sell its product to the artist is an act of censorship and discrimination.”¹⁵ Since the privately held Danish company had recently announced that a Legoland theme

FIG. 8.14

Ai Weiwei, *Snake Ceiling*, 2009



park would open in Shanghai, Ai suggested that “they just want to be safe, because they’re expanding globally, and China is their biggest market.”¹⁶ Ai then set up drop-off points where fans left piles of Lego sets for him to use. The company subsequently backed down and changed its position, redrafting its policy to state that it would no longer police the thematic purpose of bulk orders.¹⁷ The Lego story demonstrates the overlaps between consumer culture, art, popular culture, and politics in postmodern visual culture.

Irony is a crucial aspect of postmodernism’s knowing address. Irony technically refers to statements and styles that mean the opposite of their literal meaning—for instance, when one says “nice job” to mean something has been done poorly. Irony is often used as sardonic humor, speaking to an audience that knows that the opposite meaning is being inferred. Irony also refers to situations of incongruity, in which outcomes are unexpected, sometimes humorously so. Ai Weiwei’s art is ironic in that it often comments, both seriously and sardonically, on the limitations of artistic expression in China. Ai’s use of the Lego sets to make his Alcatraz sculptures simultaneously referenced the fact that China did not allow him to leave his home (hence the Lego sets as a convenient medium) and the irony of Lego as a toy brand deployed for artistic political intent. That irony was only furthered by the company’s censorship and his crowd-sourced response to it. Ironic humor has been a crucial mode of political resistance movements, allowing for things to be said and represented indirectly.

Self-awareness of one’s inevitable immersion in everyday and popular culture has led some postmodern artists to produce works which reflexively examine their own position in relation to the artwork or the artwork’s institutional context. As we have noted, theorists of postmodern identity understand the subject to be fragmented, pluralistic, and multifaceted, and identities are performed rather than fixed within us. We can see these concepts of performative identity in the work of artist Nikki S. Lee. In her series *Projects* (1997–2001), Lee combines performance art and ethnography (the study of cultures through empirical means). She both observes and adopts the styles of particular subcultures and identity groups such as skateboarders, punks, drag queens, hip-hop musicians, Latinos, Korean school girls, seniors, tourists, exotic dancers, and yuppies. To infiltrate these groups, she changes her hair, style of dress, weight, and mannerisms. Her aim is not to fool people into believing she is an authentic member of these groups, but to experiment with new identities through cultural performance. Introducing herself to members



FIG. 8.15

Ai Weiwei, *Trace*, 2014, Alcatraz
(installation view)



FIG. 8.16

Nikki S. Lee, *The Hispanic Project* (25), 1998, from the series *Projects*, 1997–2001 (Fujiflex print)

of each group she infiltrates, she explains her artistic project and then gains acceptance over the course of a few months. Once Lee is a part of the group, she has someone take snapshots of her in her new social environment, and these photographs are displayed as part of her artwork.

Lee's engagement with the production of an identity she does not authentically own or occupy points to the postmodern idea that identity is produced through performance. On the one hand, Lee imitates through disguise and performance, which might reduce identity to simple categories of signification that can be copied and reproduced without a lived relationship to their meanings. On the other hand, Lee's integration into these groups attests to her strong capacity to transform her being beyond appearances. Lee, who is Korean American, states that her performative images are an

extension of her own identity, which she defines as a constantly changing set of relationships. As critic and curator Russell Ferguson writes, "despite the seriousness of her preparation and the apparent success of her 'disguises,' Lee is on one level never playing a role at all."¹⁸ Her images are quite convincing. In these casual snapshots, no one appears to be posing. They appear "authentic," signaling Lee's "success" at the integration performance. Yet Lee also clearly stands apart in these images. This is most obvious in the images that address ethnic and racial identity: although she looks entirely comfortable in the "Hispanic Project" images, her Asian ethnic identity is also evident. Yet her performance also points to the performance of others in her images, the codes by which we can easily detect a particular subculture or social group. In this context, Lee's work questions notions of identity as innate, calling into question fixed identity categories, authenticity, and the limits of appropriation.

Lee's work points to a central aspect of postmodern knowing: as viewer-users, we often occupy two positions at once, the viewer who sees the artifice and the viewer who consumes the message. The aspects of postmodern style that we have discussed, which interpellate us as knowing viewers, thus constitute us as viewers who can occupy multiple positions at once, navigating between seeing the illusion and the framework that constructs it, and participating in the pleasures of narrative and the image while critiquing it.

Remix and Parody

When postmodernism asks if there can ever be new ideas and images, it also asks: Does it matter? The world of images today consists of a huge variety of copies, parodies, replicas, reproductions, and remixes. In art and architecture, as well as popular culture, the idea of an original image or form has been thoroughly

subverted. Remixes and mash-up culture are also the direct result of changes in the production, dissemination, and marketing of media forms, including the rise of YouTube and other web media channels. Creators of emergent independent media forms and productions have capitalized on the web, social media, and phones as alternative venues for cultural consumption. YouTube, which was founded

in 2005, has become the most popular global Internet site for video viewing by younger viewers age 18–34.¹⁹ YouTube’s viewership has risen sharply, with more than 1 billion visitors a month in 2013, 80 percent of whom are outside the United

States. YouTube’s original intent was to provide a platform for nonmainstream, amateur content, yet its phenomenal growth demonstrates the changing nature of audiences, viewership, and cultural production. On YouTube, content from around the globe, from professionals and nonprofessionals, sits side by side and is interlinked. Google purchased YouTube in 2006, and its integration into Google’s array of online tools means that it became a site for the release of both advertisements and in-stream video ads that run before the content. YouTube has helped create the phenomenon of the viral video, with Korean K-pop singer Psy’s hit *Gangnam Style* becoming the most watched video in 2012, inspiring a huge number of remakes. Some YouTube stars now have millions of subscribers and make large earnings from the site. A good example is Dan TDM (The Diamond Minecart), whose YouTube channels have over 10 million subscribers. On these channels, he narrates his experiences playing games such as *Minecraft* in real time, so that the viewer sees the game screen from Dan’s point of view, sometimes with his face inserted in the corner, commenting on everything with drama and fervor. This reconfiguration of the audience, author, and cultural producer shows how the online video platform has effectively made the “expert” producer category obsolete and provided an easy platform for the proliferation of remixes, remakes, parodies, and mash-up culture in general.

Here we can see the intersection of a set of technological changes derived from digital technology (in terms of both consumer access to video cameras and editing software and web distribution) with a set of cultural practices and values which have to do with pilfering cultural texts, parody, irony, and the postmodern ethos that nothing is new. Remix video culture has its origins in early television



FIG. 8.17

Screen shot from Dan TDM video, *My House Burned Down*, as shown on YouTube, 2016

fan cultures, such as *Star Trek* slash fiction (discussed in Chapter 2), in which fans re-edit and rewrite episodes of the popular science fiction television show to create the impression of homoerotic feelings between the male protagonists Captain Kirk and Spock. Remix video culture includes reworked movie trailers, ad parodies, and reworked YouTube viral videos. GIFs, television and film clips of a few seconds that are repeated in a loop circulate on the web and social media. Cultural theorists and legal scholars have long argued that all culture is to a certain extent remixed, combining styles and elements of previous culture, design, genre, sound, and image. The proliferation of remix videos on the web has emerged through digital technology, but it exemplifies older cultural practices. As we discussed in Chapter 5 in relation to artists Sherrie Levine and Richard Prince, copying, remix, and remake techniques can raise legal questions because determining the ownership of the fragments of work appropriated in a remix can be a complex matter.

Remix culture is, through its very form, addressing a knowing viewer who knows the original text and gets the references and who is savvy about the structure and form of moving image culture. A GIF of a film scene can be a humorous commentary on a movie star or a deconstruction of a small gesture, but it can also be a commentary on film camerawork and form. Remix culture speaks to the viewer who gets the reference and can read what is remade and remixed. For instance, *The Lego Movie*, discussed earlier, was remade by Greenpeace in protest of Shell Oil's commitment to Arctic drilling and a deal that Shell Oil had made with the Lego Group to distribute Lego toys at Shell gas stations. The video *Everything Is Not Awesome*, which went viral, was produced by the agency Don't Panic in London. It shows the familiar Lego figures in Arctic Lego landscapes being swallowed up by oil, comically and tragically disappearing under the black ooze. The video presumes viewer knowledge not only of the original *Lego Movie* but also of the broader political debate over Arctic oil drilling.

The Greenpeace video is emblematic of the proliferation of parody in remix culture, with the use of remix strategies to create ironic and comedic commentaries. Parody is a form of imitation yet is usually deployed as a satiric commentary on the original text, a form that precedes postmodern style but has taken hold in postmodern culture. One way we can see this is in relation to classic film and television genres. Throughout most of the classical Hollywood period of cinema (1917–1960), for instance, many films were created to fit specific genres, such as the western, the gangster film, the romantic comedy, or the action picture. One of the essential aspects of genre theory is that



FIG. 8.18

Screen shot from Greenpeace video *Lego: Everything is NOT Awesome*, 2015

specific genres (in film, television, literature, etc.) have conventions and formulas that are recognizable to viewers, whose pleasure derives in part from a combination of seeing familiar elements and recognizing variation in them from one film to the next. Although genres still thrive in popular culture, with new television genres being created all the time, the vast majority of genre works today are genre parodies. Importantly, these texts work at two levels at once, participating in genre codes at the same time that they self-consciously parody those codes. So, for instance, a horror film such as *Scream* (1996) is a parody of the horror film genre that taps into viewer knowledge of the genre's conventions and formulas. Directed by well-known horror film director Wes Craven, the film repeatedly refers to horror film conventions like characters being killed after they have sex or being attacked after they say "who's there?" In addition, the film is peppered with dialogue about the movies ("You've seen one too many movies"; "Life is like a movie, only you can't pick your genre"). Yet it is also a film that is as scary to watch as any other horror film. After *Scream*, most horror films continued this tactic of addressing genre-savvy viewers, with such films as the *Scary Movie* series taking the genre parody to camp levels. Even romantic comedies, one of the most resilient of traditional genres, often include parodic elements and reflexive dialogue about genre conventions.

These styles point to the way in which, as we noted, postmodernism often involves citation or quotation, in terms of both referencing other texts and putting things in quotes to indicate ironic distancing. Rather than referring to real life, texts refer to other texts (also called intertextuality), creating layers of meaning. These multi-layered texts speak at different levels and ask viewers to follow down a chain of signifiers from one meaning to the next. A television show such as *The Simpsons*, for instance, has been deploying this style since the 1990s. It parodies older films and television shows, has celebrity cameos, and consistently references existing popular culture texts to play with their meaning—often with ironic humor.

Pastiche

One of the key terms used to describe this culture of imitation, remake, and parody is pastiche. Film theorist Richard Dyer has written that the primary way to understand pastiche is as an imitation that announces itself as such and that combines elements from other sources.²⁰ The term *pastiche* is derived from the Italian word *pasticcio*, which refers to a combination of elements that evokes, according to Dyer, assemblage, collage, montage, *capriccio* (a composing style that combines elements from different places), medley forms, and hip-hop sampling, scratching, and riffing. Dyer points out that pastiche has a long history in image-making. Within the realm of imitation and quoting that constitutes pastiche, we can find different kinds of combinations and relationships to the original texts—from ironic quoting to parody to remixes to mash-ups. Pastiche has a very particular relationship to history. As a strategy it can often involve pilfering from history and combining

historical elements in ways that empty the signifiers of historical meaning, combining them in (sometimes mismatched) fragments of style. This approach typically is a form of play with the very ideas of quotation and the copy and the ways in which we come to know history. Pastiche invocations of the past rarely intend to make a statement about the historical eras or texts they reference. Instead, they gesture to the act of reaching back to styles to remix and remake with the abandon that a world of manufactured goods and a built environment loaded with remains of older styles affords. More important than making new meanings or revealing old ones, pastiche asks us to take note of the seemingly limitless recycling of ephemera and fragments of signifying artifacts (e.g., old, discarded house parts) that fill and even litter our world in the postmodern era. This tendency to unmoor signifiers from their histories and use them in a mix of disjunctive styles reflects postmodernity's preoccupation with freeing up signifiers of history from the demand that they yield the truth of their pasts. This is done in order to engage in commentary about the impossibility of pure knowledge about the pasts embedded in built environments and in art of a consumer era in which styles and meanings have proliferated and have been cheaply reproduced ad nauseum. Pastiche questions the status of the original history as well, reminding us that the copy or the part copy in itself has a legacy grounded in a devotion to easy and fast methods of reproduction.

We can see this in the work of artist Jeff Wall, who layers his works with references to philosophers like Walter Benjamin and to canonical works of art, such as Rodin's *The Thinker* and Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur L'herbe*. Many of his works are direct pastiche remakes of famous artworks, displayed as large backlit transparencies. In *A Sudden Gust of Wind (After Hokusai)* (1993), Wall remakes a famous 1831–33 print by the Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai, which

FIG. 8.19

Jeff Wall, *A Sudden Gust of Wind (After Hokusai)*, 1993 (large color photograph displayed in a light box)





FIG. 8.20

Katsushika Hokusai, *A High Wind on Yeijiri*, from the series *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*, c. 1831–1833 (woodblock print)

depicts peasants responding to a gust of wind with Mount Fuji in the background. The original Hokusai print is a woodcut with an abstract printmaking texture, made by an artist who also produced a famous woodcut of a cresting wave. The Hokusai image here is part of a series of works of different views of Mount Fuji and an early representation of movement. In this Hokusai image, the figures' gestures indicate movement captured in an instant as a person whose sight is obstructed by a blowing scarf lets go of papers that fly through the air. In its representation of an instant, the Hokusai print anticipates the instantaneity of photographic imaging (it was made just a few years before photography emerged in Europe). In contrast, the Wall photograph derives its meaning from its status as a photographic remake of an older form, a woodcut. Wall stages his images to make them look spontaneous. A similarly posed group of figures respond to the flying papers against the backdrop not of Mount Fuji but of a drab industrial landscape. When exhibited, the image creates the effect of an elaborate canvas, at once photographic, cinematic (with its evocation of movement and its backlit effect), and painterly. Wall's image was created using digital imaging tools that allowed him to seamlessly combine elements from more than a hundred shots.²¹

The acknowledgment that we can only know the past as reproduction and quoted style, through its copied remnants, is a key theme in art that engages with pastiche, particularly in relationship to memory. French artist Christian Boltanski engages deeply with questions of memory, history, and the image, specifically the event that shadowed the twentieth century: the Holocaust. In many of his works, Boltanski replicates the signifiers of the Holocaust (photographs of victims, archival boxes, discarded clothing and shoes) to reflect on how the Holocaust hovers

over European-American culture. Boltanski has created works, called inventories, that evoke archives, with piles of boxes that may or may not contain records or objects. He has made installations of clothing piles in which visitors are in some cases obligated to walk across the clothing that evokes the emptying out of bodies. It is important to note that he is not denying the facts of the Holocaust. Rather, he is referencing the effect of the Holocaust while refusing its representational codes of commemoration. He has stated, in trickster fashion, “my work is not about XXXXXXXX it is after XXXXXXXX.”²² Note that the objects in the work are not laden with special, highlighted meanings (we are not given the names and identities of the specific subjects represented) but are simply by-products of somebody’s everyday life, found stuff that signifies absence and erasure rather than marking a specific life.

The role of the everyday portrait photograph as an icon of memory and history is a key feature of Boltanski’s work, but not to reclaim and name a lost identity. Rather, he asks us to consider “the complex suspicion that surrounds photography’s documentary claims in a postmodern and post-Holocaust world,” according to Marianne

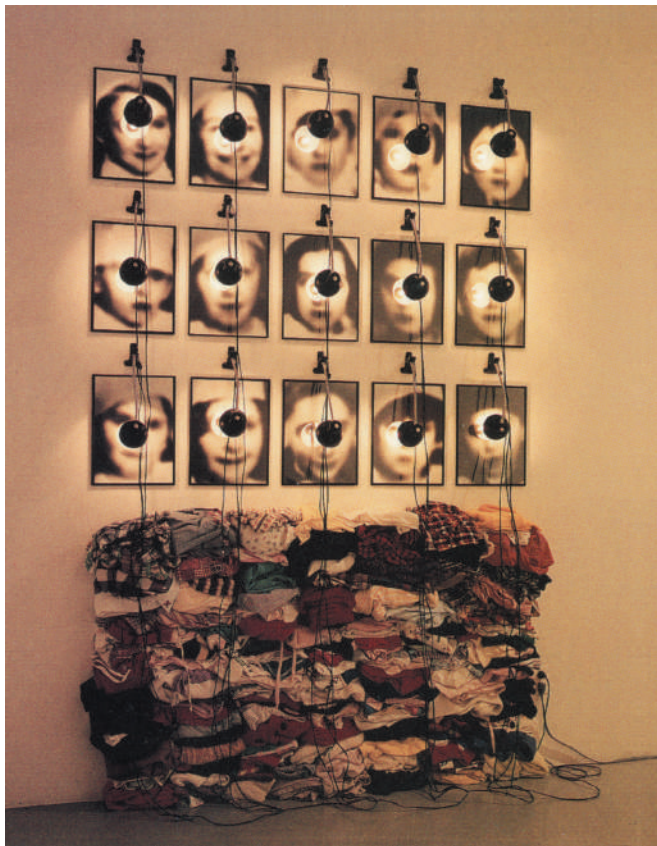
Hirsch, who states that his work is “devoted to uncoupling any uncomplicated connection between photograph and ‘truth.’”²³ Boltanski reworks past images, though never to excavate history. Rather, he engages in pastiche with photographs as unknowable

artifacts that are easily dislodged from their historical referents. He does this in order to draw attention to the desire we have to reclaim and to know that is undercut by the conditions of the artifact as always incidental and partial, never a repository of truth. In this version of *Reserves* (1989), he took 1930s images of Jewish school-children, rephotographed them, and then placed them behind lights. The students’ faces have become a blur, each a haunting image with dark eye sockets lit by a desk lamp that evokes both interrogation and the glare of historical analysis. Nothing is known about the fate of these children whose faces are scrutinized up close by the camera. This work is thus not, like most art about the past, about retrieving these children’s identities; rather, it invokes the imminence of their death at the time of the photograph’s taking. Similarly, the clothes stacked beneath evoke the possessions left behind by Holocaust victims, the empty clothing that signals absence.

Ultimately, Boltanski’s work engages with the topic of the individual and memory in ways

FIG. 8.21

Christian Boltanski, *Reserves: The Purim Holiday*, 1989 (installation with photographs, metal lamps, wire, secondhand clothing)



that make us think about how we know the past. Richard Dyer writes that pastiche critiques the concept of the modern subject as the center and author of discourse. “Accepting that [we] are in the realm of the already said may be a source of anguish,” Dyer states, if we are invested in ideas of the originating position of knowledge and authority. Pastiche articulates affective content through imitation; “it can, at its best, allow us to feel our connection to the affective frameworks, the structures of feeling, past and present, that we inherit and pass on. That is to say, it can enable us to know ourselves affectively as historical beings.”²⁴ Pastiche and ironic engagements with history show how seeing the past is always within the visual episteme of the present.

This reworking of past elements can also be seen in artistic and design engagements with materiality. In Chapter 3 we discussed Kara Walker’s *A Subtlety* sculpture (Fig. 3.38), in which she recreated a mammy figure out of sugar in a former industrial sugar factory. This reshaping of material also informs the *Soldadera* series by artist Nao Bustamante. *Soldadera* is the outcome of five years of Bustamante’s research about the role of women in the Mexican Revolution, the armed struggle of 1910–1920 that involved the overthrow of a dictatorship and protests about land ownership and labor practices. Bustamante used the archival footage and photographs she found to make a film and other installation elements and to reconstruct the dresses worn by *soldaderas* (women soldiers). She had the dresses rendered in Kevlar, a modern synthetic fabric developed by chemist Stephanie Kwolek in 1965 that is widely used in the manufacture of body armor. Kevlar’s aramid fiber, a rich golden yellow in hue, is heat-protective and highly absorbent of blasts. By some measures it is stronger than steel. The resilient Edwardian dresses that Bustamante constructed for the historical *soldaderas* are voluminous, oversized replicas.

FIG. 8.22

Nao Bustamante, *Kevlar Fighting Costumes*, from the series *Soldadera*, at the Vincent Price Art Museum, 2015



Installed here in the Vincent Price Art Museum in Los Angeles, they loom, headless yet larger than any of the spectators who enter their field of display.

Bustamante previously carried some of these dresses out to a snow-covered grove in upstate New York, pelting them with bullets to test the material's strength. Some of the dresses displayed still have bullets lodged in the fabric. One such dress rests in a vitrine, its bodice riddled with lead. This protective display is offset by a nearby touching station where the spectator is invited to feel and unravel a Kevlar remnant that has been torn, demonstrating, as reporter Hannah Manshel has noted, that "Kevlar has an Achilles' heel: once it has been hit, it begins to unravel and cannot be used again." Like sugar, the medium of Walker's monument to black women's labor, Kevlar is an ephemeral substance. Despite its reputation for longevity and hardness, the fabric is malleable, vulnerable to impacts and impressions of history.²⁵

Postmodern Space, Architecture, and Design

Just as the experience of modernity changed concepts of space and time, with the rise of urbanization and communication technologies creating a separation of time and space, postmodern space and design also create new kinds of experiences. In modernity began a separation of time and space (through the railroad and other modern technologies) that increased in the context of postmodernism and the rise of digital technologies. Concepts of postmodern space have tended to focus on simulation and the emergence of nonplaces. Simulations, as we noted earlier, have

been a dominant theme in postmodernism, and the continued proliferation of virtual worlds in gaming demonstrates the extent to which simulated experiences have currency today. Many of these games strive for realism, yet, as we noted in Chapter 4, Minecraft has become a global phenomenon through a deliberately unrealistic, boxy, and pixelated aesthetic. Minecraft's appeal is its focus on building, shaping, and expanding worlds, rather than the creation of realistic virtual worlds. At the same time, there have been simulations that have effectively deployed the virtual as a means to augment and move beyond the real. In April 2015, a group of professionals and activists calling themselves No Somos Delito (We Are Not a Crime) created a hologram protest in response to a Spanish law curtailing public protest and free speech.²⁶ The actual hologram

FIG. 8.23

Hologram protest in Madrid, by No Somos Delito (We Are Not a Crime), April 2015



projection lasted only ten minutes, repeated a few times on a scrim in front of the congressional building. Yet the protest had an important afterlife online, as it circulated through mainstream and social media. The artists' use of a simulation to raise awareness about restrictions on the movements of actual bodies in space was thus effective precisely because of its simulated reality.

Postmodern spaces are often sites of distraction and waiting—freeways, airports, ATMs, waiting rooms where people are all on their mobile phones. These are spaces that are defined by being en route to somewhere else, and spaces in which people are connected virtually to other spaces while also physically “present.” Marc Augé refers to these as nonplaces, sites in which we are solitary, disconnected, and distracted.²⁷ Virtual space defies the laws of Cartesian space in that it is not easily mappable or graspable; it thus demands new models for thinking about how we are situated in space.

Postmodern design and architecture have built on these changing concepts of space to reflect in self-conscious ways on design and the history and function of architecture. Modern architecture presents itself as functional, meaningful, and a technological and aesthetic improvement on previous architectural styles through an embrace of technology, the aesthetic of the machine, industrial materials, and the idea of the building as a symbol of power; postmodern architecture and design have tended toward irony, kitsch, and play. As we noted earlier, an embrace of the play of symbols and kitsch in Las Vegas was an inspiration for early postmodern designs.

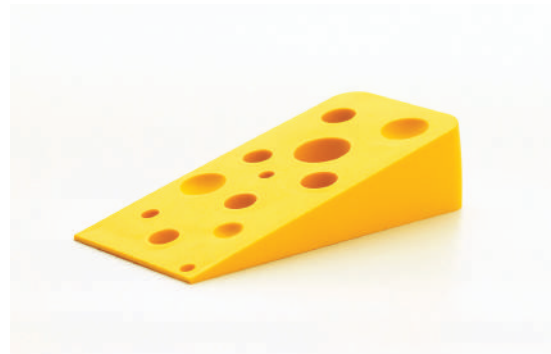
The affectionate reference to kitsch in an expanded form can be found in many forms of contemporary design. Andrew Stafford's Swiss Door Wedge, for instance, is a playful riff on the shared forms and consistency of a cheese wedge and a doorstop. It is kitschy, yet it is also playfully functional. As designer Tim Parsons writes, the Door Wedge is “a piece of product punning that transcends kitsch due to its designer having a knowing reason for applying what would normally be seen as ‘inappropriate’ design language. . . . It is a concise, if whimsical, illustration of how meaning can be applied successfully to a mundane domestic object.”²⁸

FIG. 8.24

Swiss Door Wedge, designed by Andrew Stafford for Randomproduct, 2004

Whereas an embrace of kitsch can be found in contemporary design, and play is a consistent feature, irony is the mode through which we see postmodernism's critiques of modern design in full force. Irony in design has at its core a critique of modernist values. Like irony in popular culture, which we discussed earlier, it speaks to a knowing consumer-viewer, who is attuned to the design elements being referenced and critiqued.

Pastiche, as a mixing of historical styles, is a key strategy of postmodern architecture. One of the earliest examples of postmodern architecture is Michael Graves's structure for



the city of Portland, Oregon, which is often referred to as the first postmodern building. It has an external façade that references different architectural styles with different patterns and materials that give it a kind of decorative aesthetic. This playfulness can be seen in an array of buildings that deploy color, motifs, and decorative variation to embrace popular culture aesthetics and defy the staid glass towers of modern skyscrapers, as discussed in the example of the AT&T building earlier in this chapter. Japanese architect Arata Isozaki's Team Disney office building for the Disney Corporation in Orlando, Florida, uses the theme of time to harmonize its different colors, forms, and references. The building's central open drum, which has been jokingly referred to as a nuclear reactor, functions as both a sundial and a central courtyard. With only one literal reference to Disney (Mickey Mouse ears over the entrance), the building is emblematically postmodern.

Postmodern architecture stresses contextualization (buildings that speak to the architectural environments in which they are situated) and the capacity to speak on several levels at once, simultaneously referencing high architecture and mass culture. Many postmodern architectural designs plagiarize, quote, and borrow from previous and current styles. Frank Gehry's design for the InterActiveCorp (IAC) headquarters in New York looks like boat sails, situated as it is next to the Hudson River. Importantly, this kind of architectural pastiche of mixing different historical styles sometimes makes no statement about history other than that history is a vast data archive, offering to us iconography and signifiers for borrowing, pilfering, and combining. Pastiche defies the idea that styles get better as they change.

Many elements of postmodern buildings challenge architectural functionality. An arch may have no structural function, a passage may lead nowhere, a façade may conceal nothing, and a Greek column might stand next to a Gothic arch. Pastiche

allows architectural elements to act as free-floating signifiers, detached from their original historical or functional context. This play with the idea of functionality can be seen in a building such as the Centre Georges Pompidou in the Beaubourg section of Paris (for this reason, the building is commonly known as Beaubourg), which was designed by Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers and houses the Musée d'Art Moderne Nationale and other cultural institutions. Its design turns the building inside out, with the building's infrastructure, such as air ducts and air conditioning, plumbing, and elevators, color-coded and placed on the exterior "exoskeleton" of

FIG. 8.25

Portland Building, 1982, designed by Michael Graves



the building. Rather than masking the building's functions on its interior, the building displays these functional systems as its ornamentation, on its skin.

A postindustrial aesthetic is also an active element of much contemporary design, signaling a reworking of industrial styles and spaces rather than a replacing of them. In cities like London, New York, and Los Angeles, former industrial buildings have become highly valued real estate, and former industrial neighborhoods, once taken over by artists, have now been turned into high-priced postindustrial living spaces. In New York's Chelsea neighborhood, which until recently had many industrial spaces along the Hudson River, the firm Diller Scofidio + Renfro redesigned the High Line. Formerly an elevated industrial railroad on which freight trains hauled goods and materials, it is now a public park. The railway had been deserted for several decades when a group of local activists lobbied to turn it into a park instead of tearing it down. The design, which incorporates plants that grew on the High Line when it was wild, uses elements to play off the railroad aesthetic of linearity, streamlining, and steel rails. It refers to the history of the site as a railroad and to the experience of looking, deliberately and playfully setting up locations along the way where people are encouraged to look at the cityscape as a form of theater. This is a knowing play with an industrial past, remaking it into a park that does not promise nature as separate from urban space, but as a part of it.²⁹

Postmodern architecture has also redirected attention toward more pluralistic habitation structures, rejecting the preoccupation with corporate structures and high-art cultural institutions that were embraced in modern architecture.

The architecture of sheds and shantytowns is engaged with by Estudio Teddy



FIG. 8.26
Team Disney Orlando building,
1990, designed by Arata Isozaki



FIG. 8.27
Embedded railroad tracks on the
High Line, New York

Cruz + Forman, whose work appear on this book's cover and is discussed in Chapter 10. The architecture studio's designs and writings are situated across transnational contexts such as the border cities of San Diego and Tijuana. In contrast to the modernists and many of the postmodern architects who designed large-scale structures for corporations or wealthy individuals, Estudio Teddy Cruz + Forman uses bricolage and "making do" with the lowest end of the economic spectrum in mind—the border settlements and shantytowns of migrant workers, for example, or the cardboard structures of people who are homeless and living in the margins of urban spaces, under bridges and in the urban canyons of public parks.

One of the primary issues that hovers over postmodernism is the degree to which its approaches respond to modernism's fading and shifting aspects, and the degree to which they signal a new era, a new episteme, and a new way of making art, popular culture, fiction, and buildings. If everything is repetition, then how do we change the political dynamics of the world? Postmodernism's self-consciousness might fold in on itself as the viability of appropriation and the remake to take us someplace new fails. Political change and resistance to discrimination, exploitation, and political violence are difficult to theorize through postmodern thought and remain tied to remnants of Enlightenment thought—a body of philosophy that is also the source of much that produces inequality and discrimination.

As we noted in the beginning of this chapter, we do not live in a postmodern world, but rather in a world in which the tensions of modernity and postmodernity are co-present, a world that has many populations living in what can only be called premodern life situations of poverty and subsistence. How those worlds are entering into modern and postmodern domains can be dramatically different from the traditional trajectory of European-American societies. For instance, how does the acquisition of mobile phone technology prior to the establishment of a basic infrastructure change contexts of subsistence living? The importance of the visual and material culture of bricoleurs, appropriators, and the pastiche workers who use the postmodern tactics of building with what is at hand to erect and adapt homes in resource-poor communities demonstrates aspects of this new episteme. This is postmodernism from below. Global capitalism produces subjects who exist farther from the centers of economic wealth and technological advancement than ever before—and an ever-wider economic divide. Yet these subjects are nevertheless global, and it is their appropriative fashioning of the materials at hand to make do and find a place that shows us the tensions of the modern, the postmodern, the postindustrial, and the global at once.

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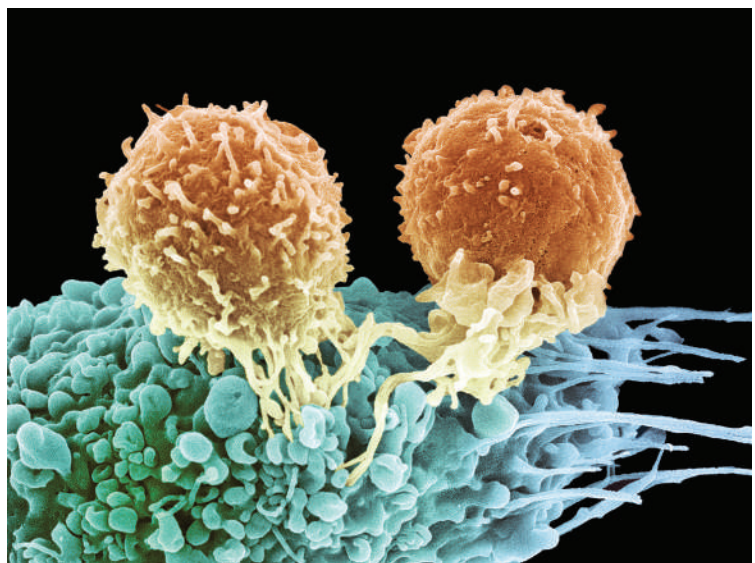
Scientific Looking, Looking at Science

this microscopic image, from a 2014 *Science News* article, depicts lymphocytes (T cells) to which researchers have introduced a virus, activating the cells to perform an immune response against cancer.¹ The image shows something that cannot be seen by the human eye and which, at the time of this article, was largely experimental: the introduction of viruses into cells, intended to prompt the body to fight its own cancer. The image is enhanced and colorized to make the lymphocytes, described as “designer” T cells, appear as lively golden orbs, and the cancer pale and dull. The article’s language draws on metaphors of both design (“designer” is a term more commonly preceding jeans, not T cells) and battle. Readers are encouraged to look forward to a time when experimental virotherapies will “redesign” our bodies at the cellular level, provoking our bodies to fight cancer from within.

With its enhanced image and new outlook on the virus as a positive cancer-fighting agent, this story is an example of how science is constituted through changing social and cultural frameworks. How we configure

FIG. 9.1

Two T cells (orange) attack a cancer cell (blue) (scanning electron microscopy)



disease, treatment, and our bodies changes with shifts in the epistemic frameworks and practices through which we experience the world. In the digital era, the individual is seen as the most important agent in human experience. For those in postindustrial capitalist societies, medicine is a market culture driven by design innovation, no less so than architecture and fashion. Researchers redesign our cells so our bodies may attack cancer for us, from within. The individual biomedical consumer's cells are enlisted with agency at the level of the molecular. Many years ago the American breast cancer physician and activist Dr. Susan Love suggested that there is the need and the potential to rethink cancer therapies from the ground up.² Surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy, the three techniques of the twentieth century, have helped immensely, but they “slash, burn, and poison” the whole body. Perhaps, she suggested, there might be a way to view cancer cells not as foreign enemies to be killed (and with them, potentially, the rest of the body), but as citizens capable of being rehabilitated.³ This image of viral therapy experimentation indicates a new epistemic model for cancer and the individual human subject, body, and cell potentially to be enlisted as active agents in its biomedical treatment.

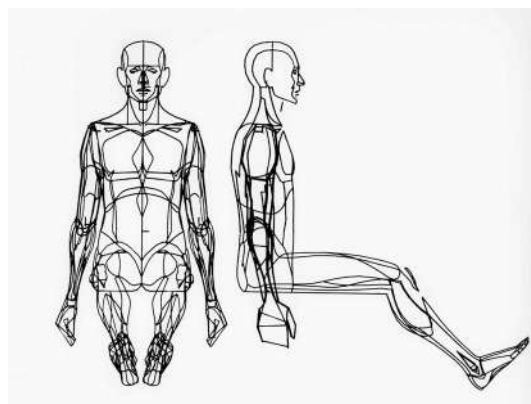
Since the digital turn, imaging has played an increasingly important role as a form of acquiring and representing data in fields that we previously did not associate with media culture—fields in the life sciences and physical sciences, as well as the social sciences. In the early decades of computing (the 1950s through the 1970s), screen image and data output were primarily textual. But at the same time, extensive experimentation was conducted around the use of computers to render graphic imaging that would have important implications for how we understand and render life in the visual culture of science and medicine.

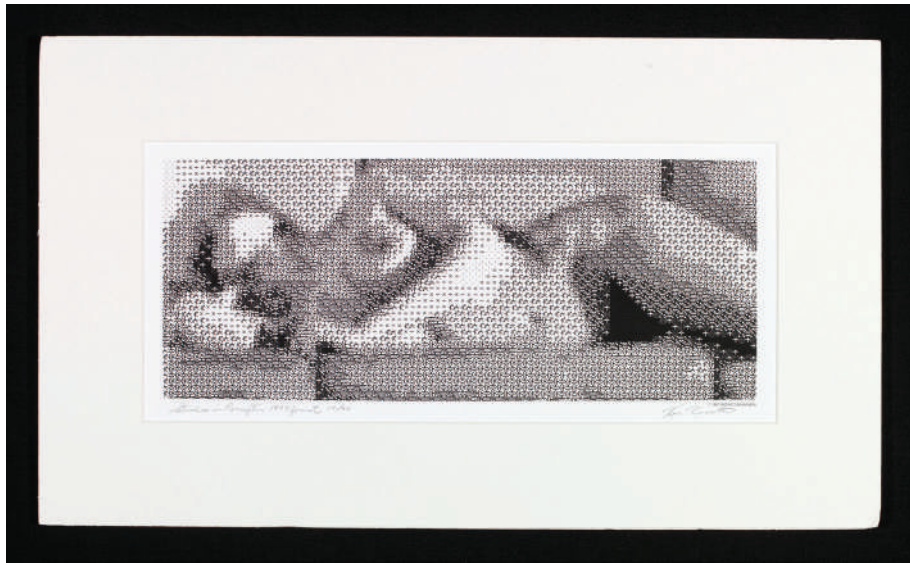
Consider *Boeing Man*, an image also known as *First Man*. This is a computer wireframe drawing produced in 1964 by William Fetter, then the art director at Boeing, a leading aerospace company. Fetter used an early Gerber Plotter to render this figure, one of the first computer renderings of a human

body, which was a part of an airplane cockpit design. Compare this image to Leon Harmon and Ken Knowlton's computer-rendered *Studies in Perception I* (1967). Knowlton is a computer scientist who worked at Bell Labs in the 1960s and 1970s, a period when the company supported experimentation by scientists working in collaboration with artists to innovate visual technology. Knowlton's most famous collaborations were with the artist Stan VanDerBeek, developing a computer animation program. This print of a female nude rendered in a computer graphics program was originally produced as an office prank but was subsequently featured in a press conference on art and technology held at

FIG. 9.2

William Fetter/Boeing Company,
Boeing Man (aka *First Man*), 1964
(digital computer rendering)





the loft of artist Robert Rauschenberg, and then in 1967 it was reproduced in the *New York Times*, in the paper's first-ever publishing of a nude image. In this work we see the classical subject of art, the female nude, rendered in a tonal field composed of tiny electronic symbols for transistors and resistors. Although the Boeing and Bell Labs computer technicians were interested in innovation of technology, they clearly also engaged in cultural iconography and social meanings about the human body.

As computers have become more adept at processing data and rendering it graphically, the role of visibility in the sciences, health, and medicine has become more quantitative and less qualitative. Tension rests between more strongly qualitative forms, such as the gray-scale analog photograph, and quantitatively based image output, such as the digital photograph, which is composed of measurable units: pixels. Indeed, it has been said that the 2010s has been an era of “the quantified self” due to the popularity of activity-tracking devices used for self-health monitoring.⁴ Late twentieth-century medical images such as sonograms and MRIs were widely received by patients and doctors alike with a sense of wonder and curiosity and were regarded as legible mainly to physicians and technicians. These kinds of images are now familiar to us, appearing more and more routinely among the personal medical records that we understand to represent our most intimate states of being. Numbers and charts are increasingly experienced as personal, not impersonal, forms; we respond to them in emotional ways. Consider the expecting parent’s “first sonogram,” a specialized scientific image of the developing fetus in utero. Though hardly a photograph (the sonogram is a graphic rendering of sound wave measurements), the image is nonetheless regarded and treasured like a family photograph.

Whereas in the twentieth century the public tended to consume more images than it produced, today almost everyone is an image producer and knows about

FIG. 9.3

Studies in Perception I, laser print after a computer-generated image, “Studies in Perception I,” by Leon Harmon and Ken Knowlton, 1997, original print produced in 1967, reproduction in 1997 (laser print)

the potential for image manipulation and cross-contextual use. We may trust that experts are behind images like the enhanced micrograph that opens this chapter and that therefore the knowledge conveyed is objective and trustworthy. But we also know that images are partial data and require reflexive consideration. Whether we consider it as expert or novice, we must approach any lab image with careful analytic skepticism concerning its apparent truths, as what images show is always partial and incomplete. The dividing line between science and culture is neither sharp nor stable over time. Scientists and medical professionals live in culture; their laboratory and clinical interpretations are never fully immune from politics, religion, taste, class, and sexual pleasure. Bodies change, as do our ideas about how they work, why they become ill, how they are classified and valued, and how best to know about and care for them.

In this chapter we propose that scientific, technical, and informational images and looking practices are no less historically and culturally situated than are other images and media. We take up scientific and technical imaging systems, practices, and cultures to consider an array of questions: How have science and medicine been informed by classifications of difference and dominant ideas about what constitutes health and the normal and pathological body and mind? How have professional imaging and looking practices helped to constitute and to change dominant epistemic notions about physical and mental difference and pathology? How have image-making practices and visibility changed in different branches of science and medicine during modernity and postmodernity? How have imaging technologies informed clinical medicine and public health for researchers, clinicians, patients, and caregivers?

We show in this chapter that although scientific visualization practices are highly specialized, these practices are not isolated from other cultural contexts. Even when data and image production and looking practices are performed by machines, these processes are shaped by human feelings, knowledge, and experience. One's cultural orientations and training in everyday life cannot be checked at the lab door, even with the best intentions of impartiality and objectivity. We present the idea, supported by science and technology studies, visual culture, and the history of medicine, that science and medicine are not value-free domains.

Opening Up the Body to the Empirical Medical Gaze

To understand the place of images in biomedicine and science, it is helpful to consider images from the pre-history of medicine. The use of images and looking, both to know the body and to improve medical treatment, dates back to antiquity. For instance, the Greeks depicted various interventions by physicians in illuminated manuscripts. In Greece, the Empiric School of Thought relied on observation and comparative analogy: one needed to observe and record illness and its treatments to know how to administer care. Greek medical practitioners were unified in the view that illness was

caused not by divine powers but by natural forces. The ancient Hippocratic Corpus, a collection of sixty medical works, in the section titled *The Art*, argues that medicine is a special set of skills involving *techné*—that is, art or craft. Drawing held a special place as a technical practice. Drawing was used to document technique, so that medicine could be practiced based on prior example.

Throughout history, the human body has been subject to brutal injury in war, and this has been a site for the construction of medical knowledge. The “wound man” is a rather startling type of illustration used in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century manuscripts to map typical locations of battle wounds. Another version was printed in the *Fasciculus de medicina*, a work by German physician Johannes de Ketham that is the earliest extant printed book to include anatomical illustrations. The “wound man” is iconic in the sense that as a symbol it has been widely reproduced and recognized in different versions. It is also iconic in Peirce’s sense, in that the image looks like a body. Indeed, it is a violently wounded body depicting all manner of injuries—though with their weapons, impossibly, still in place. Although we may see this as a pictorial image, and indeed an iconographic one, this particular “wound man” is in fact also a spatial index, providing a diagram of common locations of physical battle injuries.

Interestingly, the chest is cut open and the flesh peeled back. What do we make of the cut-open body? “Looking within” is a common trope for getting at hidden truths, whether we identify truth with an abstraction such as “the soul” or a hidden physical structure that is symbolic, such as the brain or the heart. The concept of bodily truth was a topic of particular interest to French philosopher Michel Foucault. In *The Birth of the Clinic*, he discusses the emergence of the concept of looking inside the body as a privileged form of medical knowledge in the late eighteenth century. This was the time of the Enlightenment, when the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen was introduced, and along with it humanistic hospital-based medical teaching, research, and clinical practice. Foucault explains that traditional methods of diagnosis before this time involved reading the body’s surface for illness symptoms and observing the body by hand and by eye, empirically—through sight and touch. With the rise of anatomical dissection during this time, as practiced by researchers such as the descriptive anatomist Marie-François Xavier Bichat, a change



FIG. 9.4
The “wound man” from an English anatomical treatise, sixteenth century

took place in processes of inquiry and interpretation. Whereas previously physicians palpated or touched the body to gain knowledge of its interior, or listened with scopes, now physicians sought empirical evidence by looking inside the body, not only cutting it open to see but also using tools to seek out aspects that could not be discerned directly by hand or by eye. Bichat, who did not trust microscopes, opened up cadavers and studied their interior structures, proposing on the basis of his observations that tissues and membranes, and not organs, were the basic units of life. By opening up and looking inside dead bodies, he found a new way of understanding and classifying the body as a system. A new way of looking and knowing came to prominence—one that involved not just seeing directly but also defining seeing itself as something that required instruments.

Medical visibility from this period forward began to involve the use of more and more instruments to measure and to enhance, mediate, and correct human observation. In Chapter 3 we discussed Foucault's interpretation of the panopticon prison as a structure that introduced the surveillant gaze. What was important was not the actual activity of seeing, but the distribution of the power of vision across different agents, including the inmate, who internalized the gaze of the guard, and the prison structure itself, which orchestrated the distribution of power. In Enlightenment medicine, Foucault saw a different kind of gaze than this panoptic one—a “medical gaze” that elicits hidden truths about life by looking inside dead bodies, through which one could discern, paradoxically, the structure of the living system. Whereas the visualization of the body in the wound maps offered a diagram for pedagogical purposes, Bichat, according to Foucault, aimed to reveal the true organization of things: he “rediscovers not the geography of the body, but the order of classifications.”⁵ A classification system, Foucault notes, is not a reflection of objective truth about the order of nature, but a social system that both creates and reinforces systems of knowledge and power in its given episteme.⁶

In the rise of the natural sciences in the nineteenth century and in biomedicine today, vision is understood as the primary avenue to knowledge, and sight is privileged over the other senses. Foucault identifies the introduction of a new (clinical) regime of knowledge in which vision plays a distinctive role in the regard to the living body as a system (“the order of things”). However, vision can play different roles in contemporaneous regimes of truth, and in privileging vision, instruments and technologies of seeing become even more important. The looking Foucault describes is crucially linked to other activities that give meaning to what vision uncovers: experimenting, measuring, analyzing, and ordering, for example. The paradox of the clinical gaze and its legacy is that vision may predominate, but it is nonetheless dependent on other sensory and cognitive processes, as well as upon tools and instruments designed to regulate, check, correct, and augment our visual capacities. Foucault's contribution was the linking of seeing to a broader set of systems of seeing as knowing, including imaging devices and tools of measurement. The seen body was understood to be in motion, an interrelationship of physiological systems and not a set of discrete,

This is a reproduction of the famous 'Vitruvian Man' drawing by Leonardo da Vinci. The central figure is a male figure with arms and legs extended, inscribed within a circle and a square. The figure's head, torso, and limbs are aligned with the geometric shapes. Above the figure, there is a paragraph of handwritten text in Italian. Below the figure, there is another paragraph of handwritten text, followed by a small horizontal scale bar with markings. The entire drawing is on a light-colored, aged paper background.

FIG. 9.5

During the Renaissance, artists took a renewed interest in classical anatomy. As we noted in Chapter 4, during the Renaissance art and science converged. As the art historian Erwin Panofsky wrote, the emergence of the science of anatomy (with its aim to understand the body's interior scientifically) was integral to Renaissance art. Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) is emblematic of the Renaissance artist's engagement with science and medicine. For this reason, *Leonardo*, a contemporary journal of digital art and science, bears his name.

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FIG. 9.6

Vitruvian Man on NASA Skylab patch and Skylab wives patch



FIG. 9.7

Leonardo da Vinci, *Views of a Fetus in the Womb*, c. 1510–1512



Panofsky noted that as the practice of anatomy became established, “painter-anatomists” were increasingly present at autopsies to depict the bodies being dissected.⁸ Da Vinci himself participated in more than thirty dissections in his lifetime, having been introduced to the practice through the anatomist Marcantonio della

Torre. Thus, his anatomical drawings were based on cadavers as well as live models. His private notebooks contain drawings of a human fetus inside what appears to be a dissected womb. The fetus drawings suggest a keen interest in the question of how human regeneration unfolds inside the living female body, an inquiry dating back to

the Greek philosopher Aristotle that would eventually give rise to disciplines including embryology, genetics, and gynecology and obstetrics.⁹ Leonardo’s fetus is drawn as if from a uterine dissection. Though it is likely to have been derived from a composite of sources (which may have included animal models), this image of living process effectively suggests death, in that the body is sliced open.

The sense that one can better understand the living body by cutting into it, physically or virtually, exposing its interior appearance and processes for empirical visual inspection, has remained strong in medicine and science. As we discuss later in this chapter, the development of modern imaging techniques, such as X ray, CT, and MRI, extended this direction of inquiry by promoting methods for seeing the living body in ways previously available only through the study of cadavers. Prior to these scientific imaging modalities, the practice of actually seeing the body’s interior was limited to observation during surgery or anatomical dissection. José van Dijck proposes that these imaging practices, from anatomy to X ray to endoscopy to digital scanning,

construct the body as a transparent entity, rendering life itself visible. Yet through the process of looking, knowledge about the body only becomes more confusingly complex. To represent more and more detail at ever-more-refined scales can provide more data than we can process and interpret.¹⁰ To look engenders knowledge, but also produces not only more data but also a desire for technology devoted to scrutinizing and further analysis. Looking engenders wonder not only because we know more when we look, but because what we see may engender more questions rather than certainty.

Wonder and this engagement in science as a mode of tantalizing inquiry have long motivated the popular reception of scientific and medical looking practices. In early modern society, dissections (of animals and humans) were performed not only for medical and scientific audiences, but also for privileged members of the public as spectators. From the sixteenth century onward, anatomy theaters were a form of spectacle through which anatomists educated and entertained their audiences of colleagues, students, and elite lay spectators. Autopsy was presented as an awe-inspiring process, offering a view into the mysterious borderland between life and death.

The Leiden anatomy theater in the Netherlands, built in 1596, was an important site for the practice of anatomy as theater. In this print, the theater is represented with a dissection underway at the central table, surrounded by animal skeletons and onlookers. At the outermost ring, men and women in street clothes appear to be at leisure, conversing in groups. A dog has wandered in off the street. The Leiden anatomy theater was a popular site for visitors, so much so that guidebooks about its anatomical specimen collection were created in the late 1600s. Its theater and Hall of Anatomy included displays of skeletons conveying moral messages about the deceased, most of whom were criminals and whose bodies the physicians had dissected in the theater. Such moralizing exhibits were justified by the status of these corpses as the bodies of mere criminals, understood as human subjects who did not deserve privacy.¹¹ Van Dijck notes that it was the anatomist, rather than the cadaver, who was the actor and focal point of the anatomical theater.¹²

A fascination with the dead body and an association of morbidity with crime would become a central feature of the visual spectacle of modernity. As historian Vanessa Schwartz writes, the Paris morgue became the site of spectacular displays in the late nineteenth century when certain types of dead bodies, in particular those of children and women who drowned in the Seine River, were put on display. Hundreds of thousands of Parisians came to see these corpses as if the morgue were a kind of free theater. Morgue personnel photographed the unidentified, decomposing bodies, but they also put unidentified bodies on display for public view in the exhibition room, creating an experience that commentators compared to that of

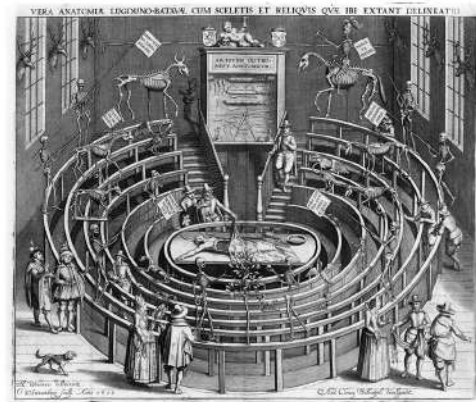


FIG. 9.8
The Anatomy Theater at Leiden,
drawn by Johannes Woudanus
and engraved by Willem van
Swanenburg, 1610



FIG. 9.9

L'Inconnue de la Seine (The Unknown Woman of the Seine), nineteenth-century wax plaster mortuary mask

viewing goods in department store windows. As Schwartz notes: “To many observers, the morgue simply satisfied and reinforced the desire to look. . . . One newspaper put it simply: ‘people go to the morgue to see.’”¹³ We are reminded of Weegee’s photograph, *The First Murder*, discussed in Chapter 1 (Fig. 1.1). When the morgue spectacle became too infamous, the Paris police discontinued public viewing, but not before morgue officials created wax replicas to preserve the form of decomposing corpses, a practice that would give rise to the city’s wax museums.

This wax figure was cast from the face of a young woman believed to have committed suicide by drowning in the Seine. Visual culture scholar Mark Sandberg notes that wax acquired a reputation as a form of recording, substituting for the more perishable human body.¹⁴ This particular cast, which became known as *L'Inconnue de la Seine* (The Unknown Woman of the Seine), gained great popularity. It was reproduced and used as a model for head studies at the École des Beaux-Arts, where students were encour-

aged to copy the enigmatic facial expression. Cheap plaster copies could be found in stores near the school.¹⁵ In beautician training schools, replicas of the drowned woman’s face were used as a template on which to practice applying makeup.

The desire to look into and upon the body was also a part of the fascination with the emerging practice of surgery in the late nineteenth century. One of the most famous nineteenth-century American realist paintings is Thomas Eakins’s

The Gross Clinic (1875). The painting depicts Dr. Samuel Gross at age seventy in a fancy black coat, presiding over a surgical theater at Jefferson Medical College. Dr. Gross is at the center of the composition. He is brightly lit, surrounded by assistants

and others who watch from the shadowy background. But the body under surgical intervention draws our attention. Eakins is a key figure in nineteenth-century realism. The painting has been often admired for its realistic depiction of the surgical theater. At the time, the painting was considered to be shocking (Gross’s bloodied right hand holds a scalpel); it was rejected for the 1876 Centennial Exhibition. It has been analyzed since from many perspectives, including a psychoanalytic one that considers the painting’s dynamic of gazes.¹⁶ The woman seated on the left, who may be a relative or the mother of the patient, recoils from the scene, hiding her face much like the woman in Weegee’s photograph (Fig. 1.1). The art historian Michael Fried proposes that this figure is a surrogate

FIG. 9.10

Thomas Eakins, *Portrait of Dr. Samuel D. Gross* (The Gross Clinic), 1875 (oil on canvas, 8' × 6'6")



for the nonmedical viewer who may want to look in fascination but is overcome by the gory spectacle.¹⁷ Her attitude contrasts with that of the clerk, who calmly takes notes, and the students, who eagerly dive into the procedure, their hands on the femur (they are treating a bone infection in the anesthetized young man). The painting thus captures not only the look and feel of the surgical theater of the mid-nineteenth century, a sight rarely witnessed by nonprofessionals, but also the medical field of the gaze, displaying the dynamics of revulsion and fascination at play in this place and time in Western medical history.



FIG. 9.11

Thomas Eakins, *The Agnew Clinic*, 1889 (oil on canvas, 84 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 118")

A second painting, *The Agnew Clinic*, painted by Eakins in 1889, shows a changed field of the gaze. The surgical theater is more brightly lit than the theater in the 1875 painting. Whereas in the older painting the surgeons appeared to be operating in their street clothes (formal black frock coats), in this painting they wear white lab coats. And whereas the earlier painting depicts a surgery on a young male patient, in this work the patient on the operating table is a young woman, unconscious with her breast exposed. The lone conscious female figure in this painting is a nurse. In contrast to the emotional gaze of the woman in the Gross Clinic painting, the nurse's gaze is direct and calm in its contemplation of the female patient. With her hair hygienically bundled under a starched white cap and her clean white apron, the nurse stands ready to assist, the image of the female "helping" professions. Changes to lighting, demeanor, and garments suggest compliance with the methods of antiseptic surgery that had been introduced by the British physician Joseph Lister in the interim between these two works. Comparison of the paintings shows us that the introduction of new methods entailed not only a new, more orderly and bright appearance of the clinic, but also a new set of dynamics of power, a newly hygienic field of the surgical gaze.¹⁸

Microscopy was introduced in the seventeenth century, photography in the early nineteenth century, and X-ray imaging in 1895, the same year that the motion picture cinema was introduced. As we will discuss further, in the twentieth century a wide array of scientific imaging technologies was introduced. With each technology, the place of looking and images in science changed. Yet the anatomical and surgical theater and the idea of medical display have retained a powerful place in the public imaginary. We see the legacy of this theatricality in Gunther von Hagens's Body Worlds, a vast collection of preserved human cadavers that has been exhibited in coliseums and museums around the world since the late 1990s, drawing large audiences.

With more than 37 million visitors to date, the Body Worlds exhibitions rank among the world's most popular mass spectacles. Gunther von Hagens is the notorious director of the project and the Institute for Plastination in Germany, where



FIG. 9.12

From Gunther von Hagens's "Body Worlds" exhibition at GAM show room on November 6, 2013, in Bologna, Italy

human cadavers are specially preserved and prepared for display. Von Hagens assumes the dual role of scientist and artist, fashioning himself in the image of the late German artist Joseph Beuys (he has been referred to as "the cadaver Beuys").¹⁹ In 2002, Von Hagens performed a public dissection in London, thus situating his practice quite explicitly in the tradition of the public anatomical theater. The cadavers that he has displayed in more than fifty Body

Worlds exhibitions around the world, beginning in Tokyo in 1995, were treated with a preservative process (plastination) and then artfully arranged in various poses and groupings intended to generate a sense of wonder about the human body and the science of anatomy

to a broad nonspecialist audience. The project has been highly controversial. Von Hagens has been accused, for example, of using the cadavers of Chinese prisoners, a charge that his organization denies.²⁰ It is possible to will one's body to the organization (his website even explains how to do this). In 2009, a French judge ruled that exhibiting human remains is a violation of the respect owed to the dead and ordered the closure of *Our Body: The Universe Within*, an exhibition mounted by a competitor of the von Hagens Body Worlds brand. In addition to raising ethical questions about the public display of human remains and the provenance of corpses, these exhibitions have in some cases affirmed traditional gender stereotypes, with, for example, male figures posed in tableaux that are active and social, such as a playing soccer, and female figures shown in traditionally feminine states, such as pregnancy. The figures are posed with layers of flesh pulled back to reveal organs, nerves, blood vessels, and muscle tissue. Some of the tableaux have referenced well-known art historical images.

Body Worlds and projects like it are disturbing and interesting not only because they involve the transformation and display of actual bodies, but also because they cross categories of art and science display. As José van Dijck notes, plastination and related methods of body preservation and display transgress the boundaries between body and model, organic and synthetic, object and representation, fake and real, authentic and copy, and human and posthuman.²¹ The visual culture scholar Cathy Hannabach further interprets the phenomenon of human remains display in the context of a queer biopolitics that informs not only popular culture but also the medical and scientific discourses with which these practices are intertwined.²² The popular is not a reduction or perversion of scientific and medical knowledge. Rather, science, medicine, and the popular intersect and inform one another in complex ways. As we saw in the Eakins paintings, which reveal much about the intimate dynamics of a surgical setting, medicine and science are not immune from the emotional, political, and sexual dynamics of looking.

Evidence, Classification, and Identification

Photographic images play an important role as evidence in science, medicine, and law. Photography bears the legacy of positivism, the philosophical belief that true and valid knowledge about the world is derived from the objective scientific method. Positivism was advanced by the French philosopher Auguste Comte in the mid-nineteenth century, at about the same time that photography gained popularity. The theory gained ground in the twentieth century, informing a broader ideology in which thinkers questioned the reliability of subjective reasoning and the soundness of philosophical and spiritual metaphysics as means of knowing and explaining the world. A positivist approach is embraced by practitioners who favor objective study and measurement as means of perceiving reality over the more subjective orientation of empirical looking. Recall that Bichat rejected the microscope, trusting his direct vision over the view provided through an optical instrument. The microscope may be regarded, in this example, as an instrument linked to objectivity, insofar as it is understood to enhance and correct vision, or to make visible what the eye alone cannot see. The photographic camera was regarded by many, in the positivist view, as a similarly useful tool for mechanically observing, measuring, and studying the real world in a manner that could check, balance, or correct potential errors introduced by the subjective aspects of human empirical perception.

The notion of photographic truth, as we discussed in Chapter 1, hinges on the idea that the camera is an objective device for capturing reality and that it can render this objectivity despite the subjective vision of the person using the camera. The photographic image is thus, in its more positivist uses and contexts, regarded as an entity that is less burdened with the intentions of its maker than, for example, hand-rendered drawings. In this view, photography is tied to the drive to reveal facts and truths that the human senses alone are not equipped to perceive. Yet, as we have shown throughout this book, photographic images are nonetheless cultural and social artifacts. Despite its status as a black-boxed technology (one that hides away its mechanisms and design choices in a single, closed unit), the camera requires its user to make subjective and culturally informed decisions. Framing, composition, lighting, contextual display, and captioning are a few of the aspects of photography that involve active decision-making. The photograph has the capacity to evoke wonder and make visible things that are otherwise difficult to see. This is done, in some cases, by freezing in time events that are so fleeting that they are missed by the unaided eye (a technique used in physiology, for example), by magnifying objects to reveal their minute structures (as photomicroscopy does), by telescopically making objects appear closer (as in astronomy), or by rendering nonoptical events into visual artifacts (rendering images out of data from sonar wave measurements, for example). Photographs may be experienced as both magical and truthful, offering us surprising new views of reality and nature and enhancing and extending our sense of power through visibility.

When it emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, photography was immediately seen as a powerful medium for use in science and medicine. It was taken up

by scientists in laboratories and in the field and by physicians in medical hospitals and clinics and was integrated into existing medical optical devices. Photographs in these contexts provided visual records of phenomena and experiments. They were used to document diseases, perform diagnoses, and record and graphically represent scientific data. In modernity, the idea of seeing farther and better, beyond the capacity of the unaided human eye, had tremendous currency; in modern thought, to see is to know. Every aspect of the physical world was subject to this expanded model of the gaze, which included both the empirical approach to looking typified by Bichat and the objective instrumentation of looking that we are describing here. Photographers took cameras up in hot-air balloons to photograph aerial views that few had seen before, much as astronauts would later do in their explorations of space. Scientists attached cameras to microscopes to magnify structures invisible to the unaided human eye. X rays, introduced to medicine as a diagnostic medium in the 1890s, offered a new vision of the interior of the living human body that could be reproduced and shared by printing the radiologic image on negative film or on photographic paper.

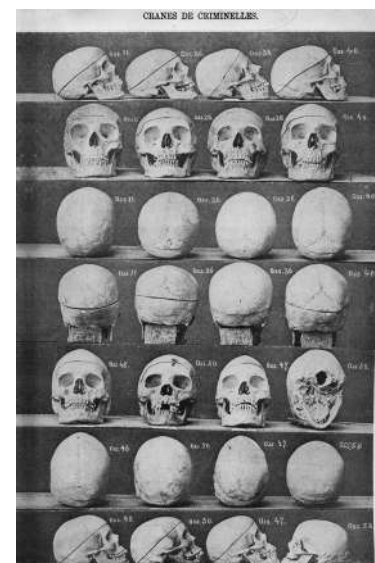
The eighteenth-century Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus famously devised binomial classification, a formal system for classifying each form of animal, plant, and mineral life known to the sciences of his time according to their genus and species. Though he regarded humans as uniquely having a soul, Linnaeus placed humans in the animal kingdom, and, in his tenth edition of his *Systema Naturae*, he introduced a system describing a variety of differences that he identified as evidence of distinct human types, or races. His species designation *Homo sapiens* included categories organized more or less on the basis of geographic regions: “Americus,” “Asiaticus,” “Europaeus,” and “Afer.” He also divided people into categories that we would now understand to be stigmatized throughout history: “Monstrosus” included natural anomalies such as conjoined twins, and “Ferus” included cultural anomalies due to lack of socialization.²³ Although Linnaeus was primarily concerned with plants, many of those scientists who took up his work, including the eighteenth-century German naturalist Johann Blumenbach, switched from a geographical to a physical appearance basis for their classifications of peoples, organizing the races according to a worldview that linked physical differences in form and appearance to a hierarchical system purporting to show proof of differences in degrees of evolution and development. A taxonomic scheme reflects an evolutionary history (a phylogeny) from simpler to more complex, “higher” forms of life. These schemas were used by those engaged in promulgating racial science during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to support claims about the inferiority of some races to others. In addition, they were invoked to advocate for social policies controlling intermarriage and childbirth with the intent to cultivate breeding in or breeding out traits and even racial groups themselves. A well-known example is Nazism’s use of racial science to justify their extermination of Jewish people, whom they saw as an inferior race.

The taxonomic classification of humans was popular not only in the emergent field of human biology but also in public institutions that provided services and managed populations. In the nineteenth century, as Foucault explains, social institutions—charity homes, hospitals, prisons—documented and classified human subjects in such categories as the poor, the infirm, the feeble-minded, and criminals as a means of managing the movements and behavior of large numbers of people. The desire to keep track of these burgeoning institutionalized populations stemmed in part from an emerging understanding among institution managers that classificatory systems could be used for social organization and control. These practices are key features of what Foucault calls biopower, the techniques used in a culture to subjugate bodies and control populations by targeting the biological features of the human species.²⁴ Biopower includes managing populations through social hygiene, public health, education, demography, census-taking, and reproductive regulation.

The camera was used as a tool by social bureaucrats and managers to document and classify the many residents of institutions such as jails and schools. It was used in ways that foregrounded the biological features of people as signifiers of behavior; physical features such as ear placement, forehead height, and nose shape were documented and interpreted in classification systems that made links between physical appearance and social health or pathology. Practitioners of phrenology (the study of the cranium's shape and size), craniology (or craniometry, the study of the skull's shape and size), and physiognomy (the study of facial features and expression) believed that the physical human body, and most particularly the cranium and the facial features, could be read for signs of temperament, moral capacity, health, and intelligence. Craniology emerged in the nineteenth century as a science of measurement using tactile and visual analysis to establish racial taxonomies for comparing the skulls of different races. Natural scientists used craniology to make claims about the supposed evolutionary superiority of people of European or Anglo descent and to try to show that people of African or Asian descent have more recent evolutionary ties to primates.²⁵ The use of these sciences of physical measurement and assessment by touch and sight was largely motivated by the racist agendas of colonial powers, which deployed science to justify their subjugation of nonwhite peoples, defined as incapable of self-determination because of supposed developmental inferiority. The technique was also used in criminology. This illustration from the *Atlas of the Criminal Man* by the nineteenth-century Italian positivist criminologist Cesare Lombroso portrays his collection of skulls of female criminals, kept for purposes of study with an eye to the establishment of correlations between particular physical qualities and criminal tendencies.

FIG. 9.13

Skulls of women criminals, collected by Cesare Lombroso, from his *Atlas of the Criminal Man*, 1896–1897



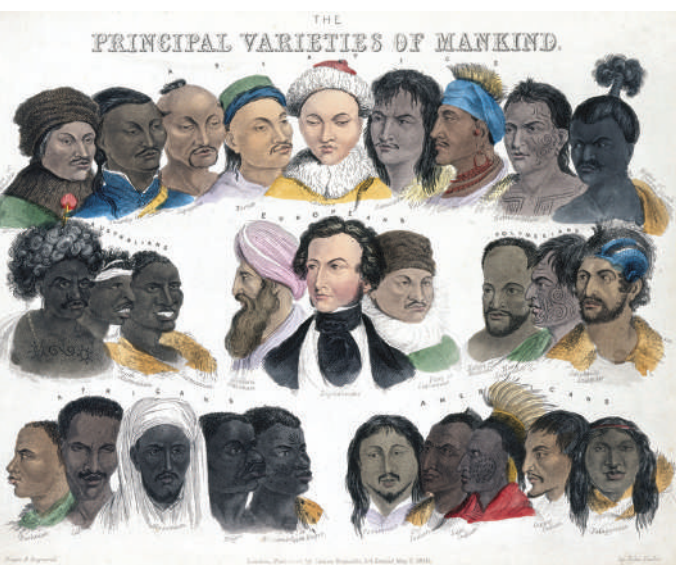


FIG. 9.14

John Emslie, *Principal Varieties of Mankind*, 1850; depiction of human races with Europeans at the center (color engraved print)

Physiognomy—interpreting the outward appearance and configuration of the body, and the face in particular—was a popular technique well before the 1800s, as represented in the work of Barthélemy Coclès, who, in his *Physiognomonia* (1533), went so far as to claim that men’s eyelashes may signify inward sentiments such as pride and audacity. This 1850 engraving of a chart by the British mapmaker and illustrator John Emslie illustrating the “Principal Varieties of Mankind” is typical of the racial thinking of the period in its placement of the white European male in the center, with other racial types at the periphery.

Later physiognomists used photography to refine this sort of physical representation, measurement, and classification. Contemporary readers of Sherlock Holmes may puzzle over the line uttered by Moriarty, who, on meeting Sherlock Holmes, observes: “You have less frontal development than I should have expected.”²⁶ This comment reflects the sentiment, widely held at the time (the late nineteenth century),

that facial appearance and skull formation are visible signifiers of “inner” qualities such as intelligence, breeding, and moral standing. In *The Races of Man* (1862), John Beddoe, who would become a president of the Anthropological Institute, stated that there is a physical and intellectual difference between those in Britain with protruding jaws and those with less prominent jaws. Whereas the Irish, Welsh, and the lower classes tend to have protruding or weak jaws, evidence of their lower state of intelligence, Beddoe argued, English men of genius have prominent jaws. Beddoe also developed what he called an Index of Nigrescence, a morphological classification system on the basis of which he proposed that the Irish were closer than the English to the so-called Cro-Magnon man and thus had links to what he called the “Africinoid” races, which he regarded as lower on the evolutionary scale. In Beddoe’s writing, we can see how a visual “science” of the body’s appearance has been used to support a deeply racist cultural ideology that relies on a false notion of semiotic fixity.

A modern interpretation of craniology, phrenology, and physiognomy would tell us that these were pseudosciences, not true sciences, not only because the links made between appearance and social meaning are false, but because they rely on the inaccurate idea that appearance and meaning are somehow absolute and fixed. A postmodern interpretation would take this criticism a step further to say that all science, including the most advanced contemporary practices, offer knowledge that is no less informed by culture and ideology. Scientific truth is relative. Scientific claims are determined by current social thinking, and by national, political, and economic contexts, as well as by the dynamics of the laboratory and

field. This relativist view of science has been the subject of intense debate and critique since the emergence of science studies in the 1970s.²⁷

Craniology, phrenology, and other sciences of categorization are related to the rise of the science of eugenics, which was devoted to studying and controlling human reproduction as a means of improving the human race. Eugenics was founded by Sir Francis Galton, author of the influential book *Hereditary Genius* (1869). In the eugenic view, not all races were deemed worthy of reproducing; that is, eugenics was guided by the belief that people of certain types and races should not breed so that their traits might be eliminated from humankind. Galton, who was British, used measurement and the then-new method of statistics to “read” medical and social pathology off the surface of the body and to analyze and compare traits. This illustration from his 1883 *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development* is composed of criminals, prostitutes, and people with tuberculosis (consumption) in composite photographs. Galton was interested in producing a visual archive of types he regarded as deviant—types that deviated from norms of social behavior and mental and physical health. He believed that by superimposing portraits of different people of

a particular type, he could better capture the general category—a criminal type, for example, is best captured by a composite of different criminal faces. His physical typologies were linked to health and social traits in troubling ways, suggesting, for example, that certain biological types were more or less prone to illnesses and/or social deviance. Eugenic thinking informed racist eugenic political programs such as German Nazism, in which scientific discourses including eugenics were used to justify racial genocide.

Paris police officer Alphonse Bertillon built upon the use of photography to identify criminals by standardizing the mug shot and introducing anthropometry, the practice of measuring bodily proportions, for identification. Bertillon created a vast archive of images and data because (unlike Galton, who was interested in general types) he was interested in identifying individuals, in particular those attempting to hide their identities (repeat offenders, for instance, who went by different names and disguises). Bertillon’s measurement systems are the origin of the mug shot photograph and fingerprinting, both of which use the distinct aspects of the physical body to identify an individual.²⁸ Photography theorist Allan Sekula writes that “the projects of Bertillon and Galton constitute two methodological poles of the positivist attempts to define and regulate social deviance. . . . Both men were committed to technologies of demographic regulation.”²⁹ Sekula notes that while Galton was interested in classifying humans into types, Bertillon was motivated by the demands of urban

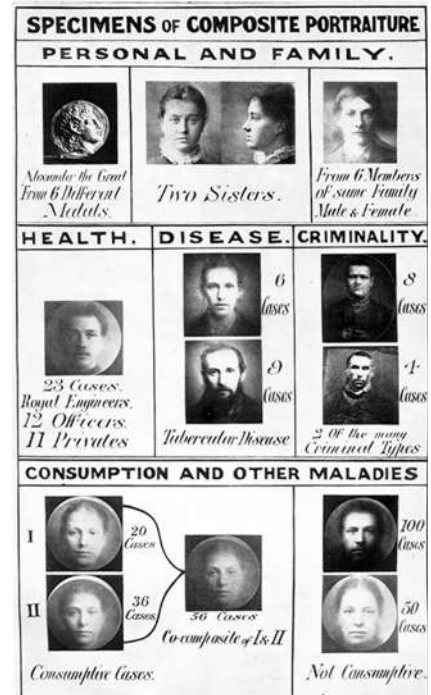


FIG. 9.15

Francis Galton, from *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development*, 1883



FIG. 9.16

Alphonse Bertillon's system for anthropometric measurement; frontispiece, "Relevé du Signalement Anthropométrique" from his *Identification Anthropométrique: Instructions Signalétiques*, 1893

police work in a burgeoning city to create an information archive to identify criminals. Photography supplemented forensic techniques such as fingerprinting, which became increasingly common by the turn of the century.³⁰ By the end of the nineteenth century, the visual categorization of people according to types, and according to specific identity-linked characteristics, became common practice in hospitals, schools, prisons, and government agencies, and many of these institutions continue to employ photography as a tool for cataloguing subjects, diseases, and citizens in the twenty-first century.

This kind of image cataloguing was used to track people caught up in the criminal justice system. It also became common practice to photograph hospital patients and people with particular medical conditions.

FIG. 9.17

Clinical photograph by M. Londe of Blanche Wittman under hypnosis asked to perform astonishment for neurologists Jean-Martin Charcot and Paul Richer, Salpêtrière Hospital, Paris, 1883



As Foucault notes, the practices of organizing people in social institutions such as prisons and hospitals tend to be similar. In both prisons and hospitals, images were used to establish visual markers of what was considered normal and abnormal, and those markers were thus in turn used to identify supposed criminal or sickly types. Classification was extended to performance in the medical context of this period, evident in the nineteenth-century photographs and drawings of hysterical patients produced under the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot. Charcot and his students and colleagues analyzed hysteria, a diagnostic category no longer in use but popular among neurologists of that period to describe mysterious bodily symptoms they observed among their patients. Hysteria was a diagnosis assigned most often to women who were considered overly emotional, who performed dramatic behaviors, and who complained of unusual, sometimes fleeting physical symptoms (minor pains and pressures, loss of sensation) that neurologists believed to be psychogenic (to have a psychological rather than physical cause). At the Salpêtrière, the mental institution Charcot directed in the late nineteenth century, neurologists isolated women diagnosed with hysteria

and visually studied them. These studies included observation of live performances by women who were provoked to fall into hysterical outbursts on cue before audiences of doctors and trainees, and the photographing of women under hypnosis. Charcot and his colleagues believed that empirical observation was the key to knowledge and used photography as a tool to provide evidence for further observation. They sometimes hypnotized patients and then photographed the gestures that they performed under suggestion so that these movements could be analyzed later. These photographs were thus used to augment empirical looking.

In all of these instances, the idea that the photograph may capture and reveal fleeting evidence of abnormalities and disorders is key to its use, whether that usage is objective or subjective in its orientation. The camera was, in the settings we have described, a scientific tool for constituting groups of people as Other, different from the socially accepted norm, in the ways described in our earlier discussion about modernity, the human subject, and the era of colonial imperialism. This use of the camera was prevalent not only in the medical and biological sciences but also in the social sciences, such as anthropology and sociology.

This photograph, taken in the late nineteenth century, is embedded in the discourses of medicine and race, as well as in colonialism. This image of an Asian man, posed against a grid while holding his braid, is an example of the use of anthropometry (the scientific study of the human body's measurements and proportions) to support claims made on the basis of appearance about qualitative and developmental differences (whether social, intellectual, or medical). This man's nudity is coded within a scientific discourse that establishes him as an object for cool and dispassionate study by Western scientists. In stripping him of his clothing, the anthropologist and photographer stripped him of his dignity. The photograph does not invite the viewer to regard the man as an individual but rather to "measure him up," to see the physical differences that set his physical form apart as an evolutionary type or specimen of a race.

These scientific systems were discredited as both racist and unscientific after World War II. Studying them helps us to consider how contemporary ideas about "truth" in scientific practices are often the product of particular visual discourses and practices. Social and cultural meanings are assigned to that which is visible and measurable, and those meanings change over time; we nonetheless rely on these meanings to make claims about universal facts and bodily truths. The critique of both the positivist instrumental augmentation of seeing and empirical observation as a source of the real has led us to recognize the ideological limits of claims about seeing and its relationship to facts and

FIG. 9.18

Anthropometric study of a Chinese man according to John Lamprey's system of measurement, 1868 (albumen print)



knowledge. In 1950, UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) issued a statement asserting that “race” is not a biological truth but rather a socially created condition. Their findings were a condemnation of those “sciences” claiming to provide methods that could be used to “prove” the superiority and inferiority of different “races.” Geneticists, anthropologists, psychologists, and sociologists contributed to the report, which was motivated by the horrified realization that the racial extermination of Jews carried out in Nazi Germany had been supported by scientific arguments.

In contemporary society, the legacy of the nineteenth-century sciences of physical identification and classification can be seen most vividly in the broad range of biometric technologies used for identification, security, and criminal investigation. The scientific identification of DNA in the 1950s, and the subsequent understandings of the individual specificity of DNA profiles, has spurred a whole set of biometric technologies. Digital biometric scanning, from facial recognition and retinal scanning to DNA “fingerprinting” (in which DNA samples from blood are used for identification purposes, not related to actual fingerprints), extends the aims of Galton and Bertillon into scientific realms that use biological and genetic markers, rather than physiognomy, to identify the individual. These technologies are used for security at airport checkpoints, national borders, prisons, stores, casinos, and even schools. Here, we see retinal scans being used to regulate Iraqi citizens during the

U.S. occupation of Iraq.

In the criminal justice system today, DNA fingerprinting is seen as getting at the “truth” of individual identity and eliminating the problems of misidentifying or failing to identify repeat offenders. Biometric technologies, however, can be as unreliable as nineteenth-century techniques. As the communication scholar Kelly Gates notes, though DNA is now seen as the “ultimate identifier,” genetic code does not establish

identification but rather “establishes only a probability.”³¹ Nevertheless, there is a strong belief in genetic databases as a contemporary version of Bertillon’s archive of biometric proof in appearances.

Facial recognition systems, which are used both in security systems and in computer applications such as social media programs that want to “recognize” people in photographs, are based on the idea that computers can be “taught” to distinguish individual faces. These systems

FIG. 9.19

A U.S. Marine takes a retinal scan of a resident of Fallujah, Iraq, November 14, 2006. In order to get a resident ID, the people of Fallujah were required to undergo a biometric exam, including a retinal scan



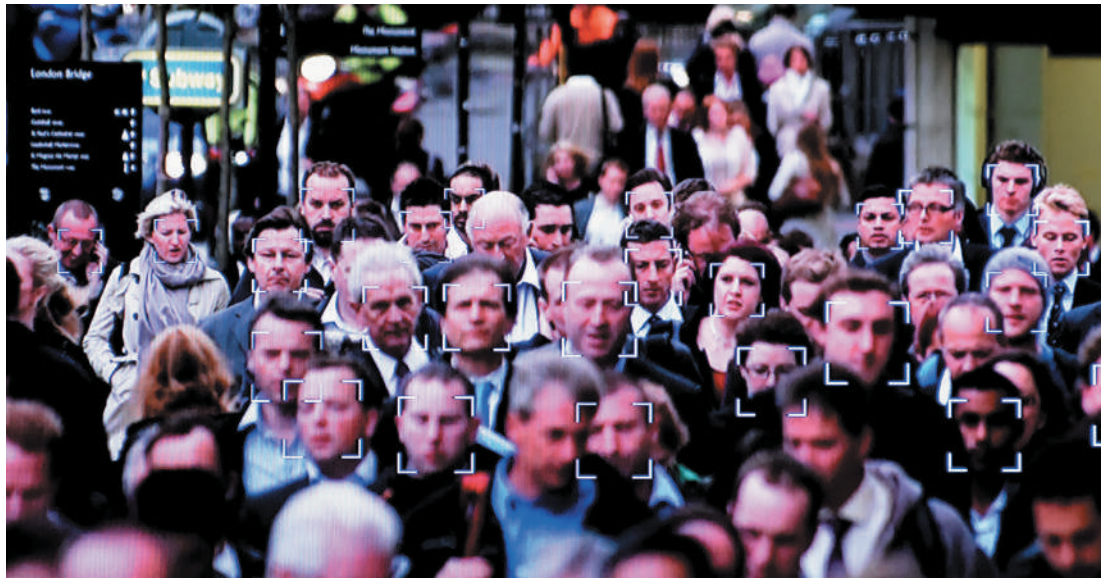


FIG. 9.20

Video showing targets to be captured and compared using a facial recognition system on display at the Global Identity Summit, Tampa, September, 2015

use electronic technologies to map the face as a series of inter-connecting points in algorithmic formulations that are related to computer animation techniques. As communication scholars Shoshana Magnet and Kelly Gates both point out, contemporary biometric technology used for racial profiling supports assumptions, like those in the nineteenth-century sciences, about the link between racial or ethnic identity and moral tendencies.³² Facial recognition programs, like Bertillon's archive of photographs and anthropometric data, are designed not only to recognize faces but also to compare them to a pre-existing archive of faces. The technology operates across the overlapping worlds of security and social networks. Thus, the facial recognition algorithms used by Facebook or Google, which are intended to give users the sense that they can easily sort and classify images of their friends, are ideologically as well as technologically linked to surveillance systems used by police and investigators. That these systems are flawed and easily prone to misidentification does not erode their social power or reputation as systems that make the world more secure and less threatening. This illusion of security is particularly powerful in today's highly unstable world, in which classification and seeing are signifiers of order and control.

Bodily Interiors and Biomedical Personhood

From ancient drawings of the body to contemporary digital imaging systems, the body has been understood in terms that mix the scientific and the magical. At the time of their introduction in the mid-1890s, X rays were widely regarded as both a scientific breakthrough and a wondrous new way of understanding life. Providing views of the skeletal system, a previously difficult-to-see dimension of the living



FIG. 9.21
 Fantasies of X-ray views in
Ballyhoo magazine, 1934

body, X rays also suggested new ways of thinking about the meaning of life and death.³³ In a similar way, the microscope revealed the presence and activity of small units such as bacteria moving and changing under the lens. As we have noted, photography launched a new era of scientific image-making by providing static records of bodily exteriors, interiors, and specimens (microscopic studies of tissue or blood, for example). The idea of the imaging instrument as helping us to see better or further than the human eye is highly relevant to X rays not only because they provide interior views of living bodies but also because, through the use of fluoroscopic viewing screens, they allow radiologists to see some interior processes in living motion.

When X rays were introduced as a diagnostic tool in the mid-1890s, the public responded with curiosity and fear to this new way of seeing life. An X-ray image is produced by exposing the body to ionizing radiation. The waves that pass through the body are registered on a photographic plate or screen. Because the rays do not penetrate bone as readily as soft tissue, the X-ray image provides a relatively clear

depiction of the skeleton and variations in bone density. These images suggested to early viewers that the technique gave its practitioners superhuman visual powers, allowing them optically to invade the private space of the body. This fantasy even took on an erotic cast, as seen in the work of some illustrators who made humorous cartoons, such as this one from 1934 which dramatizes the fantasy of a male cameraman using the rays to peer through women's clothing. At the same time, X rays were received with awe and fear because of the skeleton's iconographic association with death. For many, seeing the skeleton system in a living body suggested death in an uncanny, premonitory, or metaphysical way.³⁴

Although microscopy was introduced in the eighteenth century (by Dutch fabric merchant Antonie van Leeuwenhoek), it was not until 1930 that the first virus to be identified was isolated, launching the field of virology. This was the tobacco mosaic virus (which affected plants), an entity long thought to be a bacterium. Electron microscopy, introduced in the 1930s, offered the potential to see the structures now called viruses, which scientists had long imagined and experimented with but could not see. Within a half-decade of the electron microscope's introduction, the crystallized virus would be made visible and photographed through it. The crystallographer Rosalind Franklin constructed a model of its structure to display at the 1938 World's Fair in Brussels. The first X-ray image of a crystal was made in 1934 by crystallographer Dorothy Hodgkin (the third woman to win a Nobel Prize), whose images of insulin, vitamin B12, and penicillin were adapted for wallpaper, fabric, and household items displayed as part of the Festival Pattern Group,

an assemblage of designers and artists brought together by the British Council of Industrial Design in 1951.³⁵ Hodgkin refused to accept a fee or claim copyright for her designs, as she insisted that the crystal patterns on which the designs were based belonged to nature and were not her creation. The design for this silk fabric was based on X-ray crystallography of hemoglobin.

When in the early 1980s the hepatitis C virus was first isolated, it was not through microscopic study of the actual virus, for it was too small and changeable to be imaged in that era, even with the electron microscopes of that time. Rather, it was imaged and verified in the form of a clone of the viral material, a copy made from the blood of a primate. Reflecting the concept of the precession of simulacra described by Jean Baudrillard, the isolation of this virus was an important demonstration of the idea that the model or copy could serve as proof of the real.

Ultrasound images provide another example of a category of medical images that has been invested with public meaning and cultural desires. Sonography, the process of imaging the internal structures of an object by measuring and recording the reflection of high-frequency sound waves that are passed through it, was introduced to medicine experimentally in the early 1960s, after its use in submarine warfare. It became a cornerstone of diagnostic medical imaging by the 1980s. Whereas X rays create images of dense structures (such as bones) and involve the use of potentially harmful ionizing radiation, ultrasound allows discernment of softer structures and (debatably) does not damage tissue. Ultrasound provides an instructive example of how visual knowledge is highly dependent on factors other than sight. We tend to think of the ultrasound image as a kind of window into the body through which we see soft-tissue structures. But in fact ultrasound involves the visual only in the last instance, almost as an afterthought to a process that is markedly lacking in visuality. Ultrasound had its foundation in military sonar devices designed to penetrate the ocean with sound waves and measure the waves reflected back as indicators of distance and location of objects. In this technique, sound is utilized as an abstract means of deriving measurements. The data generated by measuring sound waves acquired through sonar are computed to assemble a record of object location and density in space. But this record need not be visual. It can take the form of a chart, graph, picture, or numerical sequence. Data derived from sonography is analyzed with computers and then translated into data fields, taking the form of graphic images

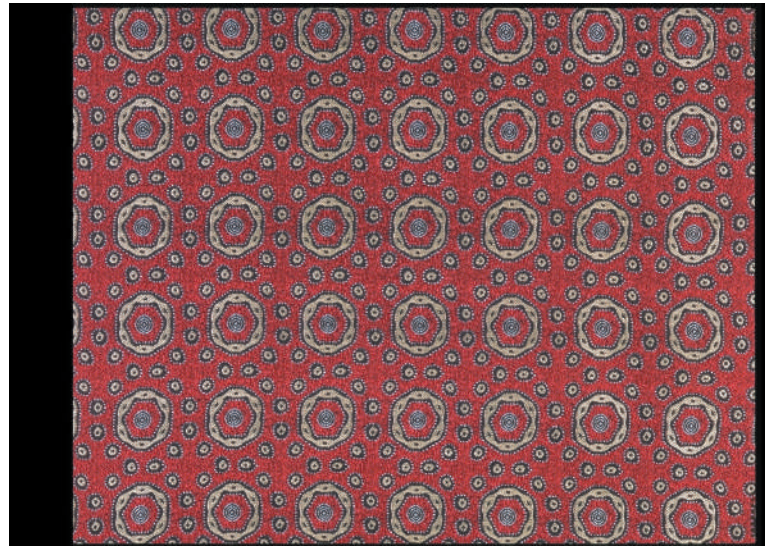


FIG. 9.22

Sample of woven silk designed by Bernard Rowland based on X-ray crystallography of hemoglobin for Vanners & Fennell Ltd, Suffolk, England, and Festival Pattern Group, Festival of Britain, 1951

that in some cases look a bit like black-and-white photographs. These images may be moving or still frames. Paradoxically, sonography is a “sound”-based system, though it involves neither hearing nor the production of noise. It is only because there exists a cultural preference for the visual that ultrasound’s display capabilities have been adapted to conform to photographic and video image conventions and not to the standards of, say, the linear graph or the numerical record.

Ultrasound has been used widely in obstetrics, a field in which practitioners had long sought means to image the fetal body and to track its development and identify normal and abnormal structures without placing the fetus or the pregnant woman at risk of radiation. However, less than a decade into the sonogram’s use in obstetrics, studies began to show that pregnancy outcomes were only minimally improved by its use in routine prenatal care; that is, there was little evidence that the technique offered clear benefits. Rates for prenatal ultrasound use doubled in Britain in the 1980s, however, despite this lack of evidence. Why did this imaging technique become so popular among obstetricians and their patients, and why does its use continue in the routine monitoring of normal pregnancies? What are its implications with respect to decision-making concerning fetal anomalies and pregnancy termination choice?

These questions in themselves suggest that the fetal sonogram serves a purpose beyond medicine; in other words, the fetal sonogram is not simply a scientific or medical image or diagnostic tool. It is also an image with deep cultural, emotional, ethical, and even, for some, religious meanings. It is worth noting that there is a long history of imagining the fetus or embryo to be a nascent person in the womb, and as such its image generates wonder, holds tremendous cultural importance, and is rife with iconic status. Indeed, as we noted earlier in this chapter, even Leonardo

da Vinci was interested in studying the fetus by creating images of it. The sonogram of the fetus is now a cultural rite of passage in which women and their families get their first “portrait” of the child-to-be. Some expecting parents relate to the sonogram quite personally, pinning it up on the refrigerator and proudly showing it off to family members and coworkers just as one might display a first baby picture. Sonograms routinely turn up on Facebook to announce the expected child.

Similarly, other kinds of clinical medical images are increasingly viewed by patients in the course of treatment. Since the 1990s, patients undergoing ultrasound and endoscopic procedures (in which a tiny fiber-optic camera is passed through narrow orifices to record a moving image of the bodily interior) have been able to view their procedures in real time, and sometimes patients are given prints or image files from their procedures in order to better understand their condition and treatment or to keep on file in a personal archive of medical records.

FIG. 9.23

Volvo print ad featuring a fetus, 1990



Medical images such as ultrasounds and MRIs have also been integrated into nonmedical advertisements to signify special care of the body or to evoke the authority of scientific knowledge. The role of the fetal sonogram as an icon of one's imagined future family is evident in this classic 1990 advertisement selling Volvo's reputation as the safe family car. This advertisement features a fetal sonogram with the message "something inside you is telling you to buy a Volvo."³⁶ It appeals to an imagined maternal desire to protect the fetus while also playing on cultural anxieties about women's bodies not being safe enough spaces for fetuses without the help of a technological safeguard (the Volvo, a brand widely known during that time for its safety-forward design). It is the image of the nascent "child" as an icon of family that tells the viewer she must conform to cultural messages about the woman's obligation to minimize fetal risks. In this ad, the fetus is positioned as if it is in the driver's seat, suggesting that the human subject in control, the one who drives the logic of the ad, is not the mother but the child-to-be.

The idea that women visually bond with their future children through sonogram images, a message that has circulated in obstetrical discourse since the early 1980s, has prompted the widely researched question of whether ultrasound viewing is tied to women's decisions about abortion.³⁷ Is the lure of the ultrasound image of the fetus more powerful than its textual or graphic representation? These queries have sparked a debate among cultural analysts and medical practitioners, and it remains a vexing issue, in part because the boundaries between the medical and the ethical and personal issues are blurred, making it clear that it would be impossible to confine this image to the category of medical diagnostic evidence alone.³⁸

This view of the sonogram as a social document awards to the fetus the status of personhood (and a place in family and community) more typically attributed to the infant after birth. The characterization of the fetus as a person has been a central factor in legal cases in which the fetus has been represented in legal terms by adults who feel they may speak on its behalf and who pit it against the wishes or rights of pregnant women who may, for example, seek abortion, or who may require medical treatment that may place the fetus at risk.³⁹ The fetal image thus acquires meanings beyond its medical meanings in obstetrical screening and diagnosis, extending to law, religion, and everyday ethics in a range of national settings.

This complex set of factors has fueled political debates about fetal images since 1965, when *Life* magazine published on its cover a photograph widely mistaken to be a depiction of a living fetus. The photograph was one of a series by Swedish science photographer Lennart Nilsson, whose popular book *A Child Is Born* depicted fetuses at various stages of gestational development until birth.⁴⁰ Nilsson's earliest fetal photographs were

FIG. 9.24

Lennart Nilsson, photograph of a fetus, 1965



enhanced and modified shots of specimens, yet they were often mistaken for photographs of living fetuses taken in utero. This image is presented in ways that suggest it depicts the miracle of life. Yet book and magazine readers are not informed that the embryos shown have been surgically removed and are not alive. Like the Renaissance artists who drew from cadavers to better understand life, Nilsson photographed fetal cadavers to make enhanced illustrations of fetal life before birth. Nilsson's technical strategies included rendering the color photographs in golden and orange tones (not unlike the colorization of the designer T cells discussed earlier), suggesting warm flesh and flowing blood. In this image we can see how the fetus is depicted as if floating in space, surrounded by lights that look like stars and providing a feeling of the cosmos.

These images, along with Nilsson's book, present scientific imaging of the body's interior as a source of evidence of life. The central narrative of these images is that medical photography and other forms of interior biomedical imaging are evidence of nothing short of a miracle in modern culture. The "miracle" refers both to control over human reproduction and development and, by implication, scientific imaging. Nilsson continued to develop his techniques and by the 1990s was using endoscopic technologies to create images of fetuses that were actually living in the womb, producing images of live fetuses at seven weeks of development. But the tendency to represent the fetus in realist conventions has persisted, with 3D and 4D imaging among the options available. The "What to Expect" website illustrates the interpellation of the expectant parent into an engagement with the technology as a form of family portraiture: with 3D ultrasound, "instead of just seeing a profile of your cutie's face, you can see the whole surface (it looks more like a regular photo)." 4D imaging shows movement, so you can "see your baby doing things in real time (like opening and closing his eyes and sucking his thumb)."⁴¹

Some feminist critics of science have noted that Nilsson's images do more than provide compelling fetal images. Like the Volvo ad, they virtually erase the mother and, in their staging and composition, convey the sense that the fetus has the feelings, actions, and status of an infant. Taken of nonliving specimens outside the womb, these images depict fetuses as if they are living people floating in space, and not actually nascent forms dependent upon the body of a woman for survival.⁴² Just a few years after the *Life* cover fetus image was published, filmmaker Stanley Kubrick evoked it in his 1968 film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, in a scene in which the main character becomes an old man and then finally a fetus floating in space, a metaphor for rebirth and the cyclical nature of human existence. But in Nilsson's work, the fetus is awarded personhood through the imaging process itself.

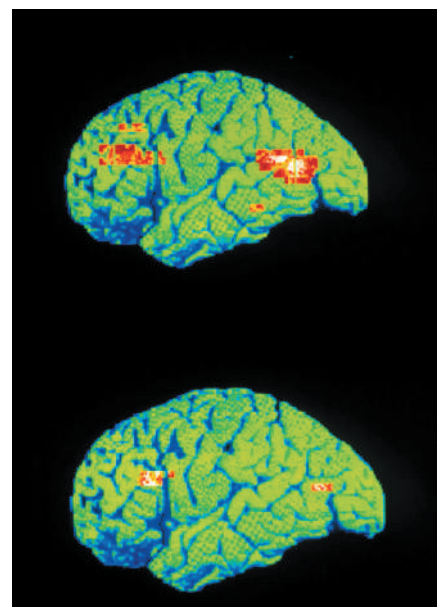
Concepts of biomedical personhood are derived not only from ultrasound and fetal imaging, but also from the vast array of new kinds of technical images that have proliferated in the last few decades. While PET and MRI have been used to scan the body in whole and in part, brain images have produced strong cultural

associations with personhood and have thus circulated through various social contexts such as advertisements and public service ads. Brain scans hold great cultural power, given that the brain is associated with thought, individual feelings, and free will. While brain scans are culturally and socially understood as images, they are derived in fact from different kinds of data systems that are only later realized as images. An MRI (magnetic resonance image), for example, is derived from magnetic field and radio wave measurements. A PET (positron emission tomography) scan is made by injecting and tracing the path of radiation through the body. In his book *Picturing Personhood*, science studies scholar Joseph Dumit notes that PET scans of the brain have quite regularly circulated in popular media as visual evidence of particular kinds of mental states and disorders. Dumit is careful to note that what such images mean to experts is quite complex, but in colorized renditions of brain activity they appear to tell the public something visually about the self and the mind. As early as 1983, *Vogue* magazine ran an image of three PET scans of brains that were labeled Normal, Schizo, and Depressed, thus demonstrating the ease with which such images are used not just to designate the “type” of brain one has but also, by extension, the “brain-type” of person one is.⁴³ As Dumit explains, such images are much more effective in demonstrating abnormalities than they are in establishing norms, and in the case of mental illnesses it is much easier to diagnose patients using traditional psychiatric evaluative techniques than to read an image of the brain.

However, perhaps because of the positivist legacy of machine imaging, brain scans carry enormous power to suggest the “facts” of brain states and mental disorders. Scans have thus been introduced in legal contexts to affirm, for instance, the mental state of a defendant. These images are often colorized (both as part of the imaging process and to enhance the view of the brain) in ways that appear to render the brain image legible. But colorization also enhances the image as an aesthetic and cultural artifact. These images are a contemporary outgrowth of the nineteenth-century use of the camera as an imaging technology of measurement, deployed specifically to visually demarcate location and physical evidence of abnormalities that would otherwise be elusive to sight, linking physical evidence to feelings, thoughts, and dispositions. For example, in this image, PET scans are used to visually demonstrate the difference in activity in the brains of a person who is “depressed” and a person who is “not depressed.” There is persuasive power in the use of color to code depression. Moreover, the image implicitly affirms research that links depression to particular

FIG. 9.25

Colorized PET scans, external views of left side of brain. Yellow-red signify low brain activity. (Top) Brain of a patient diagnosed as “depressed.” (Bottom) “Healthy” brain activity in a patient after treatment for depression.



brain areas as something more meaningful than clinical diagnosis. How is this brain image anything like the truth of depression? What does it tell us that would matter in better understanding and treating depression?

The Genetic and Digital Body

Throughout the history of science and medicine, the body has been defined within many different paradigms. Ancient concepts of the body presented it as a malleable, magical figure, like clay. In the early stages of modernity, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the body was often characterized as a clockwork mechanism, within the machinic worldview of that era.⁴⁴ As the Industrial Revolution ushered in the era of steam, the body was imagined as being like an engineered machine, exuding heat and energy. The body of the early twentieth century, in which antibiotics were developed, was understood to be knowable at the scale of the molecular and represented in narratives invoking battles and warfare as the site of invasion by bacteria and viruses. The mid-twentieth-century body (the Cold War body) was described as a communication system within the emerging paradigm of cybernetics, as signals sent and received according to a self-regulating system. The computing model still pertains as we increasingly interpret our bodies through ever-more-refined systems of measurement and quantification.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the genetic paradigm of life took a new form, which in many ways intersected with digital and postmodern paradigms. The body was understood as flexible and changeable, in the same way that digital technology involved networking, coding, and remixing. The genetic body of the late twentieth century was characterized in terms of code, understood through the frameworks of mathematics and computer systems as a body that not only operated according to genetic code but could also be recoded, genetically altered, and cured.

The Human Genome Project (HGP), a global scientific endeavor to create a complete genetic “map” of the human genome, was begun in the late 1980s, at a moment when genetics captured the scientific and popular imagination. By the 1990s, genetics became the field that scientists and the public turned to for clues about the origins of everything from smoking to schizophrenia, from cancer to criminal behavior, prompting the rise of gene therapy, genetic counseling, and genetic testing. Genetic science is not simply about identifying the genes that constitute the human chromosome; it is also about identifying genes linked to disease, behavior, and physical appearance. Genetic therapy thus understands genes as they relate to medical aberrations and pathologies. Just as nineteenth-century scientific measurement practices were used to shore up ideologies of racial difference, so gene identification and therapy is used to map and alter differences among human subjects. These techniques also have the potential to be used in troubling ways. Genetics has emerged as a potentially problematic signifying system in discourses of biological and cultural difference.

The appeal of the genetic model of the body rests in its rendering of the body as a kind of accessible digital map, something easily decipherable, understandable, and containable in the form of code. The HGP was presented, in the 1990s, as a means through which the body's potential resistance to disease could be restructured. The genomic map, which was fully sketched out in an initial stage by 2003, resulted in the identification of 1,800 disease genes and provided the basis for more than 1,000 genetic tests for human conditions. The HapMap project was begun in 2005 to map the full spectrum of genetic diseases. (In a procedure that is typical of medical protocols, the volunteers whose DNA was used for the project are anonymous in ways that recall the anonymity assigned to dissected bodies.)

Scientists and journalists describe the HGP metaphorically as the culmination of modern science in its potential for control over the human body. The gene is thus constructed as the magical code to explain life. Scientific metaphors are not simply ways of talking; they are constitutive of what science sees, and they affect how scientific practices are conducted and understood inside and outside the lab. These metaphors are the chosen metaphors of geneticists themselves, who adopt these models to describe their own work.

References to the Renaissance abound in science in ways that reveal underlying narratives about reproduction, replication, and the alliance of art and science. In these analogies, the Renaissance is perceived to be an era of immense progress in human creativity and fine art, and the current biotech era is seen, by analogy, to be equally historically important. These connections are encapsulated in this 1995 ad for a DuPont DNA labeling kit called Renaissance. The ad appropriates Andy Warhol's work, *Thirty Are Better Than One* (1963), which is composed of numerous copies of the *Mona Lisa*, to refer to the product's replication qualities. The image is effective, yet it carries many unintended ironies. Haraway has written of this ad, "without attribution, Du Pont replicates Warhol replicates da Vinci replicates the lady herself. And Renaissance™ gets top billing as the real artist because it facilitates replicability."⁴⁵ It is a further irony that Du Pont then trademarked the Renaissance product name, claiming intellectual property rights to the name of an historical epoch in order to sell the idea of reproduction.

In earlier scientific epochs, we have shown, practices of looking were central to discriminatory systems claiming to be objective knowledge systems. The identification of visible and measurable differences in skin tone and color and body shape and size has been used to justify stereotypes and discriminatory practices. Today, these appearance-related markers of natural difference are supplemented or replaced by the supposedly more accurate

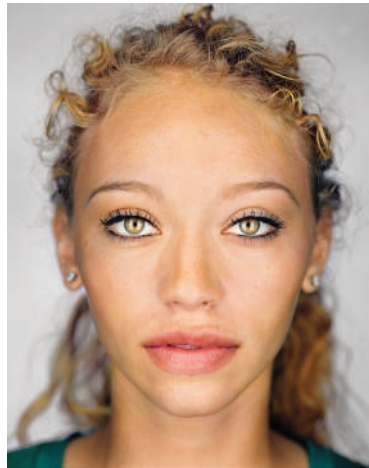
FIG. 9.26
DuPont Renaissance™ ad, 1995



sign of the invisible gene. We now understand ourselves to exist at the molecular level. As an invisible marker, genetic code seems more fixed and more factual, far from the field of discourse, outside of historical context and the social field of power and knowledge. If differences are genetically determined and therefore immutable (except perhaps through gene therapies or drug treatments), it becomes easy to imagine that social forces may not be responsible for or effective in changing differences of mental capacity, physical skill, and other human attributes. For instance, a genetic argument could be used to claim that criminals are genetically predisposed to commit crimes; hence, we need not waste money on programs to improve their social environments. Genetic mapping has raised the specter of a world in which people could be discriminated against by insurance companies and other institutions because of their genetic makeup, and laws are now being enacted to protect against this eventuality.

A genome is a map of an organism's DNA, and we have so far in this chapter discussed how DNA has been used for security and surveillance and how mapping the genome is potentially a tool for discrimination. But there are many contemporary instances in which DNA testing and genomic mapping have empowered ordinary citizens. For instance, through the Innocence Project, some people who have been wrongly convicted of crimes have been exonerated by the retesting of DNA evidence. In Argentina, where the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo have demanded for over thirty years evidence about their children who were disappeared by the military junta that ruled from 1976 to 1985, many of the grandmothers have been reunited with their grandchildren who were secretly adopted into military families at birth (after their mothers were killed). It is through DNA testing that these family connections have been identified, confirmed, and reinstated. As Alondra Nelson writes in *The Social Life of DNA*, the use of genetic information has been a crucial aspect of African Americans charting their personal histories of slavery and mixed-race heritages. Nelson charts the "DNA diasporas" that link the exploration of roots to racial justice. The shift from a view of genetic science as a highly suspicious enterprise to a tool that can be marshaled for reparation has implemented paradigm shifts in certain communities, particularly the African American community that has been subject to centuries of racist and discriminatory scientific practices.⁴⁶ These efforts to use DNA evidence to build community, many of which take place through low-cost, direct-to-consumer DNA testing, can provide family narratives that make sense of complex racial inheritances, including enslaved ancestors. These practices are not without problems or unintended consequences, yet the belief in scientific evidence weighs heavily. As Nelson notes, we ask DNA "to embody some of our loftiest goals for social betterment," though clearly "we cannot rely on science to propel social change."⁴⁷ DNA testing and genome mapping are both ways through which the body and its meanings are reimagined, for better and for worse.

The image of the genetic body is also an image of the digital body, a data body that can be easily combined and reassembled in postmodern fashion. The



visual technique of morphing, for instance, makes it difficult to distinguish between one person and another, thus collapsing the boundaries between bodies that were once considered inviolable. Digital morphing techniques were introduced in the 1990s and are sometimes used to make statements about universal humanity and the blending together of races, such as the legendary Michael Jackson video, *Black or White* (1991), in which people of different ethnicities are morphed from one into another. Jackson used this new visual technology to make a statement about racial harmony. In 1993, *Time* magazine ran a much-discussed cover, “The New Face of America,” with a computer-simulated image of a woman composited from the U.S. population’s various racial identities. These morphed images recall the nineteenth-century composite photographs of Sir Francis Galton, although their intent was not to identify abnormal types but to see all humans as connected.

As concepts of racial identity continue to change, depictions of actual multi-racial identity have built upon these previous virtual imaginings. In 2013, *National Geographic*’s 125th anniversary issue included an article on the “changing face of America,” including a series of portraits of multi-racial families by the New York-based German photographer Martin Schoeller, who explained: “I like building catalogs of faces. I want to challenge the way we use appearance to shape identity.”⁴⁸ An interactive gallery allows readers of the online version to scroll through a compendium of different faces of people identifying as mixed, published with the U.S. Census data provided in 2000, the first year that respondents were given the option to check more than one identity box. As the journalist Michelle Norris points out, the codification of difference via appearance is complex and can be contradictory and even painful. Norris quotes from responses she has collected through her own “Race Card Project.” One respondent quips, “I am only Asian when it is convenient.” Another writes, “Lonely life when black looks white.”⁴⁹ As Norris notes, statistics and appearances tell only a part of the story. As the science studies scholars

FIG. 9.27a, 9.27b

Portraits by Martin Schoeller from the feature article “Changing Faces,” *National Geographic*, November 18, 2013



FIG. 9.28

Nancy Burson, billboard for the *Human Race Machine*, New York City, 2000, sponsored by Creative Tim

Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star write, to classify is human. But as they show in the case of the South African apartheid system, to classify has consequences and may be rife with political implications and risk as well as fraught with instability and contradiction. Classification does not just reflect differences; it also produces them, engendering social consequences.⁵⁰

Artist Nancy Burson has been a major force in the development of visual morphing of bodily appearances not only in the art world but also in the crossover area between art, science, and police forensics. In the late 1980s, Burson was instrumental in developing computer software that “aged” portraits—that is, she worked on the software to create a virtual rendering of a person as he or she could be predicted to look many years after the photograph was taken, based on composites of photographs of their relatives along with genetic science research on heritability of features. This technique was an important breakthrough in creating images through which to continue searching for missing persons, and in particular children, years after their disappearance. The technique she helped to devise continues to be used to speculatively “age-progress” missing persons.

Burson’s *Human Race Machine* (2000) allows participants to visualize themselves as different races. She writes, “the concept of race is not genetic, but social. The *Human Race Machine* allows us to move beyond difference and arrive at sameness.”⁵¹ If we compare Burson’s *Human Race Machine* to Bertillon’s and Galton’s charts, we can see how concepts of difference and sameness have guided not only the scientific technique of human classification but also the humanitarian concept of human connection. This concept may be as troubling, in its dream of homogeneity and the supposed ease of imagining oneself into a different identity, as the difference that racial science sought to uphold.

Contemporary imaging techniques such as morphing indicate not only changing concepts of the postmodern digital body but also the changing relationship between the body and technology. One of the primary concepts for thinking about the relationship between the body and technology is the cyborg, a figure touched upon in earlier chapters. A cyborg, or cybernetic organism, is part technology and part organism. The cyborg has its roots in early computer science and the science of cybernetics, which Norbert Wiener founded in the postwar period as a science that integrated communication theory and control theory.⁵² Early computer scientists worked with the idea that man-made devices could be incorporated into the human body’s regulatory feedback chains to fulfill the desire for a “new and better being.” Since the 1980s, the cyborg has been theorized, most famously by the feminist science studies

scholar Donna J. Haraway, as an identity that has emerged in the context of postwar technoculture. It is a posthuman identity that represents the breaking down of traditional boundaries between body and technology. In her famous 1985 essay “The Cyborg Manifesto,” Haraway theorized the cyborg as a means to think about the transformation of subjectivity in a late capitalist world of science, technology, and biomedicine.⁵³ Rather than suggesting that subjects experience technology solely as an external and oppressive force, Haraway writes of the body–technology relationship as one also filled with potential for imagining and building new worlds and new ways of living. There are, of course, people whom we might think of as literal cyborgs, people who have prosthetics and electronic devices embedded within their bodies. Much contemporary work in cyborg theory postulates that we are all cyborgs to a certain extent, given our complex bodily relationships with technology; for example, our interaction with our computers and mobile phones means that we can experience technologies as inseparable from our bodies. More recent work on the body–machine relationship develops Haraway’s point that we both fear and revere science and technology, enjoying their benefits while remaining cautious about their economic, political, environmental, social, physical, and emotional impacts.

From the cyborg body to the genetic body to the digital body, concepts of the body continue to shift as new epistemes emerge, existing in both contradiction and conformity with old ones. For instance, contemporary understandings of how we coexist with the vast number of microbes in our bodies as a kind of ecosystem and of the role of viruses in activating the body’s immune system have begun to replace the idea of the body as an entity at war with bacteria and viruses. We also live in a time when the structures of behavior, attention, and choice are increasingly guided by mathematical computer algorithms. Algorithms, computer

FIG. 9.29

Enzo Henze, *Red Ambush*, 2008, mural (projected drawing created by algorithm, dimensions variable)



codes that create the structure of programs, shape much of our online interactions and participation. They determine how Google curates images for us, how Amazon recommends books and products to us, and how Facebook presents ads, news, and friends to us. Algorithms, which are of course programmed by humans, increasingly shape financial markets and, by extension, human taste and behaviors. In design, we see one example of this new paradigm in generative design, in which algorithms are used to create design patterns as if on their own. To create this work, the artist Enzo Henze instructed the computer to draw like a human—the strands look like threads, which are then printed on paper.⁵⁴ The algorithm is emerging as a key force in shaping culture, yet we rarely see its form visualized, as it is in Figure 9.29.

Visualizing Pharmaceuticals and Science Activism

The contemporary body is not only defined by genetics and digital code; it is also imagined as a body that can be transformed, even down to the core of identity, through pharmaceuticals. This is a terrain in which the vast and powerful drug industry has played a powerful role, partially mediated by government regulation, in creating ideas about how personalities and personal outlooks on the world and daily life can be transformed and improved. While there is little doubt that mental illness, trauma, and clinical depression are significant problems in the world, the discourse of pharmacology is aimed more broadly at the general population, constructing everyone as a potential patient and consumer of mood- and personality-altering drugs. The goal of many of these companies is to create populations of patients who don't simply take drugs once in a while to stay healthy, but who, as Joe Dumit puts it, take drugs "for life," with the double meaning of taking them to stay alive, and taking them every day throughout one's life.⁵⁵

The United States and New Zealand are the only countries that allow direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertising for prescription drugs. Advertising has thus become one of the ways in which consumer-patients receive information about medication choices in these national contexts. DTC advertising speaks directly to consumers, even though they can only purchase these drugs with a doctor's prescription. This kind of marketing has generated debates about advertising ethics and the logic of promoting drugs outside a medical context. Proponents point to surveys showing that most medical professionals feel that these ads have a positive effect in motivating patients to be active in their health care decisions. A similar argument can be made about the vast amount of medical information now available to people online. Yet there is also significant evidence and concern that DTC ads make drugs seem better than they actually are.

DTC ads construct particular kinds of subjects. Their aim is, quite simply, to sell drugs and promote their continued use, and they do so by speaking to consumers as potentially abnormal and diseased subjects. Thus, these ads interpellate

consumers as subjects in need of chemical modification that will make them happier, more normal, and more fulfilled. Many of these ads have checklists that consumers might easily feel interpellated by. Dumit notes that like these ads, checklist exercises on websites, where potential patients answer questions to receive a score that indicates if they might need such a drug, function as a kind of self-help mechanism to create empowered self-identified patients. Yet they are also disempowering. He notes: “Even if feeling and experience are used to fill out the checklist, the algorithm then decides whether or not these count as objective symptoms. The score one receives thus takes the place of a lived experience of illness; the score can even become its own experience.”⁵⁶

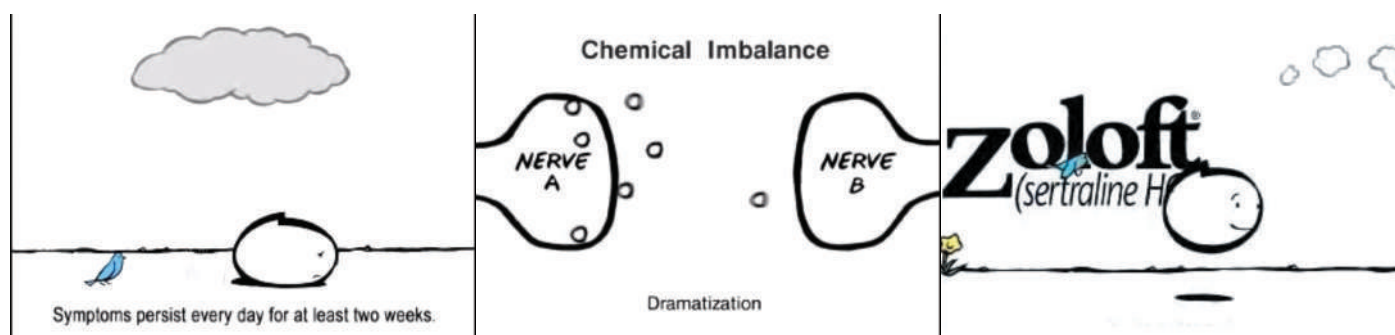
It is a convention of DTC ads that they offer abstract promises through depicting people in post-treatment states of being. By law, ads that are indicated (meaning that they discuss the conditions that the drug is designated to treat) are required to provide information about the potential negative side effects. This often results in advertising texts that are comically at cross-purposes, with soft-focus images of smiling people accompanied by lists of horrifying potential side effects. Nonindicated ads are not required to do this, but they are also not allowed to mention the conditions they are indicated for, resulting in ads that are abstract and mysterious, featuring feel-good situations with little concrete information.

In general, DTC ads do not feature images of people taking drugs or receiving medical treatments, instead displaying happy and content people in casual, leisure situations or offering short, vague testimonials about how good they feel. Many use cartoon graphics to depict how molecules and bodies interact. In this campaign for Zoloft, a popular antidepressant, pill-like cartoon figures stand in for humans whose mood and outlook have been improved by the drug.

This campaign borrows from early twentieth-century ads that used a comic book narrative format to tell a story of a fictional consumer (this is “Kathy’s story”). Dumit notes that these stories produce a kind of “pharmaceutical witnessing” in which the telling of the story constructs the viewer in a position “of having to make sense of the story or ignore the risk it portrays altogether.”⁵⁷ That there are risks

FIG. 9.30

Screen shots from Zoloft television ad, animated and directed by Pat Smith, 2001



in selling drugs this way is a key point in criticisms of DTC ads. For instance, the popular drug Vioxx, which was used to treat arthritis and other muscular pain, had a very successful DTC campaign using former skating champion Dorothy Hamill to extol its transformative potential. When the Food and Drug Administration reported in 2004 that Vioxx may have contributed to the deaths of almost 28,000 users (out of 25 million), it was rapidly withdrawn from the market by its manufacturer Merck. Creating consumers for pharmaceuticals, which is what DTC ads do, thus involves a level of risk beyond that of most advertising.

Ads sell more than a brand; they sell something larger—a lifestyle, a national ideology, capitalism, an identity, or consumerism itself. Like other types of ads, DTC ads are not just about selling drugs as a normal, everyday part of our lives. They are also about selling science, medicine, and their institutions as essential aspects of our everyday existence and not just as places we might turn to during periods of illness. As Dumit puts it, the pill-taking citizen believed to have multiple health risks has become the norm.⁵⁸ DTC ads encourage consumers to keep using certain medications. The benefit to pharmaceutical companies of keeping consumers on drugs for extended periods of time is clear. Going on a drug for life, rather than for the relatively brief period from illness to recovery, means lifetime participation in a consumer market.

Pharmaceutical and medical visual culture extends beyond the advertising of products to consumers. Public debate over the role of pharmaceutical companies in the business of health has produced competing kinds of images. Since the AIDS crisis of the 1980s, artists have produced images and media texts questioning the ties between private corporate interests and national health care. Artist-activists have questioned the role of corporate science in health care and the role of the media in reporting on scientific advances in health care since the 1980s.

In the 1980s and 1990s, ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) introduced a new era of political visual culture about scientific practice. ACT UP explicitly challenged both cultural perceptions about AIDS and policies concerning science and medical funding and research. ACT UP's visual campaigns, which

included performances, sit-ins, videos, and posters, were an important venue for the distribution of accurate health and scientific information about AIDS transmission at a time in history when science and medicine were ignoring the crisis. ACT UP used images as an integral aspect of their provocative public interventions to get mainstream media to pay attention to the AIDS crisis. ACT UP distributed its messages as posters,

FIG. 9.31

ACT UP New York Outreach Committee, *It's Big Business!*, 1989 (offset lithograph poster)



stickers, and stencils on the sidewalk to shock the public into thinking about the presence of people with AIDS, the government's refusal to address the growing health crisis, and the role of pharmaceutical companies in the epidemic. The visual culture of AIDS activism was one of the most transformative and effective interventions of visual activism by nonscientists in the twentieth-century culture of science.

The contemporary health landscape thus includes a broad range of activities from the big business of pharmaceutical companies to activism to an increased amount of self-help information that questions science. Breast cancer awareness campaigns, built on the example of early AIDS activism, produced a broad array of consumer products and have built corporate alliances, as seen in this Estee Lauder campaign, which is shot like a fashion ad.

The “pinkwashing” of breast cancer has been criticized as a kitsch and narrowly gendered response to disease demanding of breast cancer patients that they be upbeat and cheery, feminine subjects festooned in an ideology of pink ribbons and merchandise.⁵⁹ Though the campaigns have been highly successful in raising awareness and funds for research, the narrow scope of their appeal marginalizes women and men who do not identify with the narrowly defined types of breast cancer victim and survivor. As science studies scholar S. Lochlann Jain asks in her essay “Cancer Butch,” and in her 2013 book *Malignant*, in the pink-washed culture of breast cancer, “how can [a butch] maintain her investment in performing toughness, let alone recuperate butchness, in the sea of pink designed to ‘heal’ by restoring and recuperating a presumed ‘lost’ femininity?”⁶⁰

As the images discussed in this chapter demonstrate, science and its objects, such as the pursuit of the cause of and cure for cancer, are not created in a vacuum or in a world separate from social and cultural meaning. Representations of science in popular media have a reciprocal influence on how scientists do science and how people live in and with a world laced with the affects and technologies of science. Scientific images, models, and simulations have cultural meanings that govern not only how they are produced and what purpose they serve but also what form life will take in our future. Patients can watch their medical procedures as they take place and “redesign” their bodies with drugs, genes, and surgeries. Our domestic realms and workplaces are permeated with sophisticated technologies



FIG. 9.32
Estee Lauder breast cancer awareness ad, 2014

that come to us through scientific research, and we give little thought to their intricate design and cost. From the image of the anatomist at work to the photograph that makes a fetus appear alive to the MRIs and microscopic images that render the body an aestheticized landscape to ads that sell science, the visual culture of science is intricately intertwined with all other domains of our lives. We may insist that science has a special place apart from the practices in which we engage every day and that its modes of visibility should be interpreted on their own terms, but we cannot ignore the immersion of science in the complexity of the everyday world and the web of practices and experiences that make scientific practice ultimately inseparable from other domains of practice.

Notes

1. Susan Gaidos, "Designer T Cells Emerge as Weapons Against Disease," *Science News*, May 30, 2014, <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/designer-t-cells-emerge-weapons-against-disease>.
2. Dr. Susan Love in the mid-1990s criticized traditional cancer treatments, including surgery (slash), radiation (burn), and chemotherapy (poison), suggesting that we need to revamp how we characterize cancer to find more effective scientific treatments. See Susan Bolotin, "Slash, Burn and Poison," *New York Times*, April 13, 1997, <https://www.nytimes.com/books/97/04/13/reviews/970413.13bolotit.html>.
3. "Imagine cancer cells as rehabilitable criminals, she would suggest; we need to change the environment in order to change them," in Bolotin, "Slash, Burn and Poison."
4. Quantified Self group founder Gary Wolf notes that contemporary health culture focuses on this "one very important person: yourself"; see Emily Singer in "The Measured Self," *MIT Technology Review*, June 21, 2011, <https://www.technologyreview.com/s/424390/the-measured-life/>.
5. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 159.
6. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970).
7. In 1986 another Vitruvian Man drawing, thought to be the work of the architect Giacomo Andrea da Ferrara, was found in a notebook that is believed to predate Leonardo's. The idea that the human body is the world in miniature, an analog for the world itself, was "in the air" during Leonardo's time. The metaphysical proposition about man's centrality to the universe was not his idea alone. See the Smithsonian article "The Other Vitruvian Man" at <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/the-other-vitruvian-man-18833104/>.
8. Erwin Panofsky, "Artist, Scientist, Genius: Notes on the 'Renaissance Dämmerung,'" in *The Renaissance: Six Essays*, ed. Wallace K. Ferguson et al. and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1953), 142.
9. There is a large literature on the Da Vinci anatomical and embryological drawings. See, for example, Charles Donald O'Malley and John Bertrand de Cusance Morant Saunders, *Leonardo da Vinci on the Human Body* (New York: Henry Shuman, 1952); Leonardo (da Vinci), Kenneth David Keele, and Jane Roberts, *Leonardo Da Vinci: Anatomical Drawings from the Royal Library, Windsor Castle* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983), 78; and Martin Clayton and Ron Philo, *Leonardo da Vinci: Anatomist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). See also the classic work by Martin Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci: The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man* (London: Oxford, 1981, rev. ed. 2007); Daniel Arasse, *Leonardo da Vinci, the Rhythm of the World* (New York: Konecky, 1998); and Pietro C. Marani and Maria Teresa Fiorio, eds, *Leonardo da Vinci: 1452–1519* (Milan: Skira, 2015).
10. José Van Dijck, *The Transparent Body: A Cultural Analysis of Medical Imaging* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 4.
11. Julie V. Hansen, "Resurrecting Death: Anatomical Art in the Cabinet of Dr. Frederik Ruysch," *Art Bulletin* 78, no. 4 (December 1996): 663–79.
12. Van Dijck, *The Transparent Body*, 122.
13. Vanessa R. Schwartz, "Public Visits to the Morgue: *Flânerie* in the Service of the State," in *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 60.

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19. Van Dijck, *The Transparent Body*, 59.
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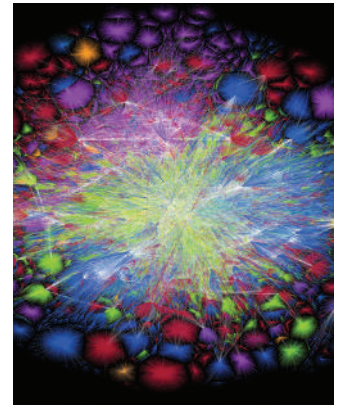
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The Global Flow of Visual Culture

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, images have moved around the globe with previously unimaginable speed. Today, images from all over the globe seem to arrive effortlessly at our fingertips and on our screens. Yet the global flow of images is subject to intense economic, legal, and political power struggles. It is also subject to debate and regulation around matters of taste and tradition. Not all human subjects everywhere share or have an interest in the same images. Not everyone has devices through which to view, make, or exchange images. Internet access varies dramatically due to broadband penetration, access to and cost of technology and connectivity, censorship, and conventions and laws.

As we see in the Opte project graphic reproduced here, global flows follow multiple routes, comprising a variegated infrastructure. Routes of image transmission are entangled with flows of data in other areas of knowledge, life, and politics. This chapter follows some of these disparate, sometimes messy threads that make up the global flow of images in the broader network of digital globalization.

Struggles around image circulation raise many questions, including who, in the words of Nicholas Mirzoeff, should be granted “the right to look.”¹ In the context

FIG. 10.1

The Internet 2015, Opte Project/
Barrett Lyon, July 11, 2015 (blue =
North America, green = Europe,
purple = Latin America, red = Asia
Pacific, orange = Africa)

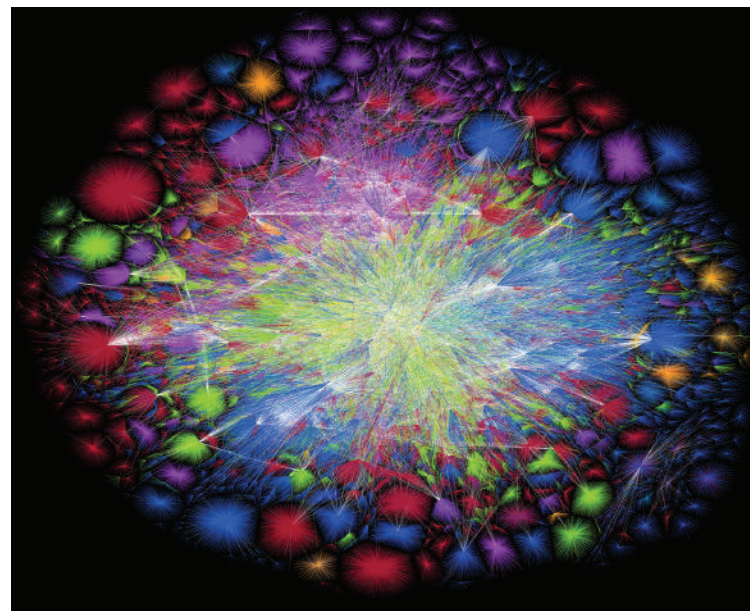




FIG. 10.2

People film with their mobile phones during a flag-raising ceremony amid heavy smog at Tiananmen Square, Beijing, during the country's first-ever red alert for air pollution

of digital and social media, sharing is key—images are regularly produced specifically with the intention of sharing them online. Thus, we must consider how images are made, used, and shared in their shifting contexts, and we must ask who is granted the right to share (which) images. With whom, and under what political, legal, and monetary terms does image sharing take place?

As we have noted throughout this book, visual culture is not only about images. It is also about practices of looking, which often are oriented toward things that are not explicitly visual or only visual. Take the

example of the built environment. The structures that surround us may or may not be designed to be seen. Their negotiation involves sound, touch, and smell, along with sight. Identity and belonging, as visual culture scholar Irit Rogoff writes, are interrogated through art and media production that engages with geography and the built environment globally.² In this chapter we consider

the global circulation of visual culture in relation to flows and spaces, in the context of new modes of visibility. Mirzoeff proposes the concept of “anthropocene visibility” to describe the effects of technologies and climate change not only on the environment but on modes of seeing.³ The Anthropocene is the name given to the current geological time period, in which the Earth’s formations and environments have been degraded by human activity to an extent that can be seen and felt pervasively, in which human activity is shaping the planet and its atmosphere. Mirzoeff rereads one of the classic examples of French Impressionism, Claude Monet’s *Impression: Sun Rising* (1873), as a study of the effects of industrial emissions on the atmosphere at the height of the Industrial Revolution. Impressionism (which we discussed in Chapter 4) is thus reread as a kind of seeing that is shaped by industrial pollution. “Anthropogenic” impacts are visible in the topography of the landscape, as we see in the Monet painting, but they may also be invisible and even concealing. Mirzoeff proposes that in fact Anthropocene visibility is a mode that typically obscures rather than reveals the environmental changes and social injustice caused by humankind’s impacts on the planet.⁴

In the visualization of the impact of technological change, these modes of visibility and concealing are a constant presence. In this photograph by Meng Meng, widely circulated in news and social media sites in late 2015, we see more recent evidence of the concealing aspects of anthropocene visibility. The photograph documents people using their mobile phones to document a flag-raising ceremony on Tiananmen Square during the country’s first-ever red

alert for air pollution. Each phone is like a candle cradled in the hand, illuminating the eerie midday darkness and bearing witness not only to the flag but also to this emblematic first day of official national recognition of the dire extent of industrial impacts on routine life.

In this chapter we look at the global flow of visual culture and new modes of visuality in relation to the built environment, the Anthropocene, the globalization of museums, and geopolitical borders. The flows of goods and capital, data and information, images and people take on heightened meaning and importance at borders—places marked by differences in the politics, culture, law, and policy that regulate and reorient those flows. It is at borders, where we find walls and enclosures as well as regulated points of access, that we can best observe the differences and the dynamics of power that give shape to the flows of visual culture and which control the right to action of the gaze in its different potential fields of vision.

The History of Global Image Reproduction

To understand the complex and uneven global flow of visual culture today, we must consider how images circulated globally prior to the Internet era, when analog printing was the dominant means of image reproduction and when the exchange of images (whether for sale or gift) occurred either by hand or through the postal system. Today's image circulation bears the legacies of these previous eras in which the global flow of images was mediated, regulated, and enabled.

Let's begin by imagining a world in which images are rare and require extensive labor and cost to reproduce. Before the fifteenth century, images were unique and did not circulate widely. Original paintings and drawings tended to be put on display or used for worship and reverence in sites such as churches or palaces. But these were not typically copies made in multiples. During the Han Dynasty in China (220–207 BCE), woodblock printing was used to create colored patterns on silk in order to reproduce the same pattern multiple times. The book widely identified as the earliest to be produced through printing is dated at 868. This is the *Diamond Sūtra*, a Zen Buddhist devotional text.

Between the ninth and tenth centuries, woodblock and metal block printing techniques were introduced in Egypt to copy images for use in prayers and amulets. In the mid-fifteenth century, woodcut images began to circulate widely throughout Europe in the form of block-books. These are books in which both text and images are cut into a single block for each page. These block-books tended to be heavily illustrated, and some were even hand-colored after printing. Around the same time, movable type was introduced to the printing process in Europe, though it had been used in China and Korea as far back as the eleventh century. Movable type consists of tiny pieces of wood or metal, each bearing the raised form of a single character. The legendary Gutenberg printing press was introduced to Europe in 1440. Though this is far from the first printing press, it is the one we hear about most in print



FIG. 10.3
Woodblock print by Utagawa
Kunisada, Japan, 1857

communication histories. This is because Johannes Gutenberg, a goldsmith by trade, designed a system with innovations that included a technique for fast and accurate assemblage of large quantities of movable type, making possible the reproduction

of more pages quickly and in higher volumes. His innovations concided with the ethos of Western industrial society, with its nascent culture of factories making possible mass reproduction of objects. The attendant culture of mass media, with its mass-reproduced copies and wider circulation of information and entertainment, was facilitated by the introduction of the Gutenberg system. Gutenberg's improvements to the old screw press's hand mold or matrix transformed printing from an artisanal, small-yield craft to a large-scale operation devoted to making large numbers of copies for mass circulation.

Text reproduction quality and quantity were greatly enhanced by the introduction of the new, more accurate and rapid-to-assemble matrix system for the movable type printing press, but image reproduction quality remained relatively poor. In Japan during the Edo period (1615–1668), mass-produced woodblock prints were used to advertise entertainment, celebrities, and popular pleasure district events and sites. Publishers worked with artists' designs, transferring them to blocks and rendering them first in black and white and later in vivid colors (either by hand-coloring to create the products now known as “vermillion prints,” or by using multiple blocks to create the prints dubbed “brocade pictures”).

But mass image reproduction required other methods developed much later. Intaglio and lithography (introduced in 1796) are techniques that capture detail and color in a way the type-oriented press could not. If we look back to the work of Lichtenstein, which reproduces the Ben-Day color dot screen (discussed in Chapter 8), we may note the relatively low level of detail and quality available in mass-media color printing through the middle of the twentieth century. The Ben-Day technique, which dates back to 1869, involves the use of tiny dots spaced closely or widely, and sometimes overlapping, in order to create fields of varying color and tonal range. The resolution of the Ben-Day image, which was widely used in comic books, is far lower than that of the digital halftone image made with, for example, the Linotype digital color printing process. In the mid-1880s, several decades

into the photographic era, newspaper and magazine presses introduced halftone printing, a process that made possible the large-scale reproduction of black-and-white photographs for mass print media. But color reproduction remained a challenge.

The desire for high-resolution image reproduction and for accurate color reproduction was powerful throughout the history of the industrial-era printing press. In 1884, the owner of the popular French conservative paper *Le Petit Journal*, Hippolyte Auguste Marinoni, understood this desire for mass news media to include color reproductions. He tested the waters by adding some color images to his paper's Sunday *Supplément illustré*. Readers responded with great enthusiasm, motivating the editor to invest in a costly photogravure printer that could support rapid mass reproduction of color images.⁵ Here is an 1894 cover featuring a color ink rendering of the assassination of President Carnot during France's Third Republic.

By 1895, *Le Petit Journal*, with its color cover images, mostly featuring carnage and disaster, had become the world's most widely circulating newspaper. U.S. newspapers followed *Le Petit Journal*'s example by introducing color offset-printing for Sunday inserts and supplements, including comic pages. Manufacturers could afford to print their newspaper advertising supplements in color—and mailboxes still are stuffed with color advertising supplements.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, image copies circulated through a host of formats including postcards and greeting cards, books, newspapers, magazines, billboards, posters, personal and family photographs, photojournalism, art prints, slides (small projectable images used for teaching and public presentation), book illustrations, broadsides, and advertisements. These circulated by mail or by hand-to-hand exchange. Museums, galleries, libraries, shops, and newstands were the major purveyors of original images. But the circulation of type-based media far outstripped that of images. It is hard to grasp this now, in a world of global image reproduction and circulation, but prior to the digital era, text was dominant in mass print media. The limited number of illustrations in all but the most expensive books prior to the twenty-first century attests to this fact.

In the mid-nineteenth century, paper printing technology introduced the potential for multiple copies and thus the potential for wide circulation. When images were used, they were typically engraved reproductions. Advertising generated enough revenues to justify the purchase of equipment to support higher quality color halftone photographic reproduction. But few book and magazine presses had a market share that could support this level of investment. Henry Luce, the wealthy business tycoon who founded Time Inc. and launched *Time* and *Fortune* magazines



FIG. 10.4

Cover of *Le Petit Journal Illustré*, July 2, 1894, with engraved illustration dramatizing the assassination of President Sadi Carnot of France

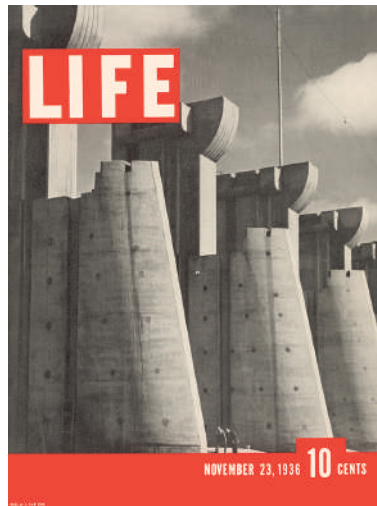


FIG. 10.5

First cover of *Life* Magazine, with Margaret Bourke-White photo of Hoover Dam, November 23, 1936

in the 1920s, was one of the few entrepreneurs with enough capital to take the risk. Luce incorporated color halftones in *Life*, his photojournalistic “picture magazine.” *Life* enjoyed a prolonged heyday from 1936 to 1972, during which time it gained a global reputation for its lush, high-quality photographic reproductions. The demand for color photographic image reproduction in magazines was clear: *Life* reached a readership of a million within weeks of its first issue, which included ninety-six large-format glossy color pages.

Yet for most of its existence as a magazine, *Life* intermittently operated at a loss. In 2002 it was reduced to a newspaper supplement, and in 2007 publication ceased. Nevertheless, the demand for global circulation of high-resolution color photojournalism of global events had been clearly established. Color photographic reproduction became a standard feature of magazine production in the twentieth century, with digital technology making the high-quality color reproduction a ubiquitous feature of wide-circulation

magazines which could be counted on to generate strong revenue, from brand-name product catalogs to popular magazines.

Digital processes and the Internet have rendered the problem of achieving quality color image reproduction all but obsolete. The business of stock photography—in which agencies collect and sell photographs for reuse, a bit like financial stock trading—started in the early twentieth century and had become a highly viable industry by the 1980s. These collections were initially composed of negatives or original prints of outtakes from magazine and newspapers shoots stored in temperature-controlled warehouses, eventually including copies of all types of photographic and film work. In the 1990s, with computers, image digitization techniques, and the Internet emerging as a reliable set of venues for making, storing, and sending images as large data files, stock photography companies like Corbis and Getty changed their strategies. Previously physical negatives and prints and their storage, reproduction, and shipping were the crux of the business. Now digital file storage, digital reproduction techniques, and the transmitting of files online are the core of the stock photography trade. One may browse the archive or collection online, obtain a file and license to reuse through the online site or email, and pay online using credit card or PayPal. The concept of ownership or licensing rights relative to an original may still pertain (for example, Getty Images still maintains and acquires photographs and negatives in physical archives). But access to and management of the physical image as a material object is no longer as relevant to its actual reproduction and circulation.

This change has transformed the circulation of images in photojournalism. As Zeynep Devrim Gürsel shows in her ethnography of digital-era journalism, a

wide range of image databases are now available online to world news editors.⁶ Image options are expanding as more and more people engage in journalistic news image-making, and more and more images are acquired by stock-image houses and media outlets, which are no longer limited by physical image or negative storage space limitations. But the demand on news editors for speedy choice-making to meet publication deadlines makes sifting through this increasing quantity of images and negotiating rights and fee arrangements difficult if not all but impossible. Whereas in the mid-twentieth century news images tended to come from the in-house photojournalist, now news images may come from citizen journalists or from stock houses that can be browsed online from anywhere in the world. With this expanded circulation of images, photographs attached to stories may come from any place and any time; captions are easily replaced, and source information is easily lost. Global image flow may increase the circulation of news, as well as ideas, knowledge, fashion, taste, political messages, and personal exchanges. But more flow does not necessarily mean more, better, or more accurate information and meanings.

The use of the Internet as a trove of information at our fingertips was preceded by the use of illustrated atlases, encyclopedias, and reference books. These physical sources typically were (and still are) stored and accessed at public libraries. Volumes such as the *World Book Encyclopedia*, a series introduced in the United States in 1917 and updated almost every year since, were introduced as physical objects that individual private families could acquire through purchase at first by mail and then from salesmen who traveled from house to house in the decades after the Second World War. The *World Book* brought into the private living room the visual and textual corpus of world knowledge previously available only in the public space of the library. This form of encyclopedia is an important precedent to the use of popular sites such as Wikipedia as a global public knowledge compendium accessible anywhere, including the private home.

The Internet supports a globally linked “space” (the web) through which images, media forms, cultural products, and texts circulate rapidly throughout the world. Art reproductions circulate on the web as well as through the global networks of museums and art fairs. We now have “net art,” a form for which the “original” exists on the Internet, as digital media, rather than circulating there as copy, reproduction, or upload of offline or nondigital work. Television networks circulate their programming globally, with many news programs and productions distributed worldwide, and series are replicated in different markets, languages, and regions. Major feature films are now typically produced through multinational studios and circulate in global markets, as well as through pirating and gray-era distribution and circulation networks. Bootleg DVD sales and peer-to-peer sharing through torrent file distribution clients such as BitTorrent are among a plethora of ways through which people share media at and beyond the margins of licensing constraints.

Transnational and diasporic cultures, in which people are dispersed across national boundaries and continents, are linked in part by global media cultures. Religious communities are linked across broad geographic areas through programming that includes webcast services, Internet radio (podcasts), websites, and blogs.⁷ People increasingly move around the world as business travelers, tourists, guest workers, refugees, exiles, documented and undocumented immigrants, and global citizens, and the distance of labor, services, and consumption grows. With this increasing circulation of people, the relationship of place to identity shifts. An individual who crosses borders may encounter and even take on new habits, beliefs, and identity positions; ideology and identity may become more complex to negotiate as the individual encounters vying ideologies and ways of being. In this era of global flows, we are more likely to experience identity as a multifaceted, shifting, and perhaps even contradictory condition. As we will explore further in this chapter, media and visual images have been important forces in the changing status of the individual, the nation, and the world in this era of globalization.

Concepts of Globalization

Global flow is not a new condition. Peoples, ideas, information, images, objects, and capital have moved around throughout history. However, the concept of globalization and its ascendance as a term characterizing the digital era has a much more recent, post–Cold War provenance. Key factors in the emergence of this concept include increased cross-border migration, the demise of the Cold War, global trade liberalization, the emergence of multinational corporations and the globalization of capital and financial networks, the development of global communications and transportation systems, the decline of the sovereign nation-state in response to the “shrinking” of the world through global commerce and communication, the rise of a global humanitarian movement and international policy organizations such as the United Nations, and the formation of new local communities not geographically bound (such as social media communities and diasporic communities linked by the Internet and social media as well as shared media consumption patterns).

During the Cold War (1947–1991), one of the primary paradigms for understanding the movement of culture across national boundaries was cultural imperialism, a concept that refers to how the ideology, politics, and the way of life of a nation are exported through the cross-border marketing of popular culture. Critics of cultural imperialism include scholars such as communication theorist Herbert Schiller, who argued that television is a means through which twentieth-century world powers like the United States and the Soviet Union invaded other countries not only with troops but also with cultural texts, images, and messages through radio, film, television, and consumer products. Schiller and other late twentieth-century theorists of cultural imperialism pointed out that although cultural “invasion” may be dismissed by some as “merely” ideological and therefore harmless, ideology is a

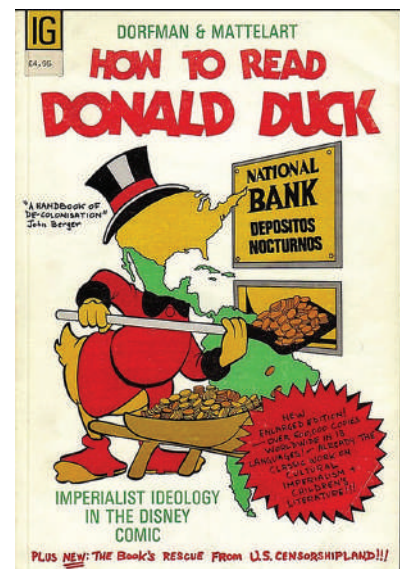
powerful means through which a country's population could be transformed into subjects who think and feel in ways that conform to the national interests of the "invading" culture. Culture in this formulation functions something like a Trojan horse through which the way is paved for political acquiescence. Seduction by entertainment lays the ideological groundwork for acceptance of the political values of the imperial force. Global circulation is critical to this practice. People travel by air as never before. And with the introduction of international standards and practices for container shipping and flight cargo in the mid-twentieth century, manufactured products also circulate as never before. Radio and television are transmitted over airwaves, cable, and satellite signals, crossing borders and invading cultures in ways that bodies often cannot. When popular cultural texts were transmitted across borders from, for example, the United States to countries in South America such as Brazil and Cuba, the critics of cultural imperialism warned, this movement served not only the radio, television, and product manufacturing industries, which saw gains through an expanded market for programming and advertised goods, but also the military and the government, for which programming made cultural inroads that paved the way for good will toward political influence, if not overt control over a population wooed and lulled by entertainment media.

One of the most influential manifestos critiquing cultural imperialism was aimed at the seemingly innocuous form of children's comic books. This text, the 1971 pamphlet *How to Read Donald Duck, a Manual for American De-Colonization*, was written by Ariel Dorfman, a Chilean-American novelist, academic, and human rights activist, and Armand Mattelart, a Belgian sociologist who worked in Chile prior to the 1973 U.S. CIA-backed coup. Dorfman and Mattelart's critique of U.S. cultural imperialism in Latin America focused on the ways that children's comic books paved the way for American corporate exploitation of Latin America by according U.S. capitalist exploitation the status of paternal benevolence. They showed how the seemingly innocuous Donald Duck comic series, though ostensibly targeted merely at children, indoctrinated different generations of readers into an ideology of trust in paternalistic capitalism. For example, wealthy Uncle Scrooge McDuck, a capitalist who sought treasures in far-off places, functioned to promote the sentiment that U.S. capitalism is, at its worst, just the amusing and benign antics of a well-meaning uncle.⁸

More recently, some communication scholars have applied the concept of cultural imperialism to the analysis of media in the era of privatization, globalization, and trade liberalization. Robert McChesney, writing in the early years of digital telecommunications, warned readers that

FIG. 10.6

Cover of *Para Leer al Pato Donald (How to Read Donald Duck)*, Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, 1971



the Internet, though lauded by many as a free, public, and open forum, was in fact headed toward privatization. He noted that behind the scenes of Internet community life, companies were snapping up domain rights and patent ownership of the systems facilitating network access even as the champions of Internet freedom were lauding the network's potential for openness, accessibility, and freedom. Apple and Microsoft vied over proprietary rights to hardware and software design as well as for the market in devices and software programs required to participate in online communities. Monopoly and finance capital surrounded the ascendance of digital media and the rise of the web as global media conglomerates such as Comcast, 21st Century Fox, and Time Warner expanded their products and services to adapt to the changing ways in which we produce and consume media.⁹ These corporations' holdings grew vastly as digital devices and the Internet became prevalent aspects of more and more areas of life. Whereas prior to the 1990s the media were more or less discrete sources of information and leisure, they now play a major and intersecting role in almost all aspects of our lives through forms such as social media networking and navigation and monitoring software. From workplace to home, from the personal to the public, and from education to healthcare and religious practice, media systems pervade our lives even in sleep, which may be measured and monitored through the use of activity tracking devices.

The concept of cultural imperialism, while still useful, is no longer adequate to describe this complex world of cultural flow. One of the key theoretical interventions into this concept of the global is postcolonial theory, a body of scholarship previously discussed in Chapter 3. As we noted, postcolonial theory considers the European imperial era (the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries) and its legacies in both the colonizing and the colonized contexts, as well as the current conditions of colonialism and neocolonialism that continue throughout the world. Postcolonial theory is useful in the consideration of both colonialism's legacy and current conditions of neocolonialism, a set of political practices that entail using market globalization as well cultural imperialism to acquire influence or economic power over a region or country.

Nevertheless, the concept of cultural imperialism helps us to see how the increased flow of goods, finance, brands, culture, ideas, and people across national borders is not benign, is not beneficial for everyone involved, and often entails tremendous gains for industry as compared to more limited gains or negative impacts on "recipients." Flows of "opportunity" through the transfer of technology, media texts, and models of learning, for example, always involve altering social relationships between countries to institute benevolence. Not only do ways of being and thinking change, so too do political ideas and relationships of power. Struggles around ideology are played out at the level of the market, including the market in images, when new markets are brought into the framework of free trade.

What makes contemporary globalization and its flows of images distinct from other periods during which images circulated globally? Many theorists define

globalization by emphasizing the vast increase in the rates of connectivity and speed at which information and capital flow in the digital era, and they highlight the technological changes that have allowed individuals, institutions, objects, and information to move across great distances with an ease previously unimaginable. Sociologist Anthony Giddens describes globalization as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.”¹⁰ Geographer David Harvey notes that globalization reconfigures time and space, introducing the term “time–space compression.” This refers in part to the way that the acceleration of economic activities “shrinks” distance, for example, by bringing together business colleagues who live across borders quickly and easily over the Internet, or by facilitating the flow of goods over borders via the relaxation of international trade restrictions. Time is compressed as well through the speed of these transactions: business associates can meet without the time it takes to travel; goods are delivered faster and further due to enhancement of services to accommodate the expanded world market.¹¹ With this escalated rate of production, circulation, and exchange, all supported by advanced technologies of communication, logistics, and transportation, Harvey argues, our experience of space and time is radically transformed. Space and time are compressed through the patterns and qualities of global flow.

Although much of the scholarship about globalization focuses on economic flows, cultural identity and affiliation are equally important features. The formation of identity in ways that involve cross-border movement, affiliation with more than one nation, and changes in identity and culture relative to this flow is captured in the concept of diaspora, a term used to denote an ethnic community that exists in a state of being dispersed across different places outside the country of origin. A diaspora includes the people who live as citizens of their homeland outside its boundaries, whether as exiles or temporary migrants. It also includes those who give up their citizenship and take on a new national identity and those who are descendents of a national culture and who identify with it through cultural affiliation (for example, through family holiday rituals), even if they have never visited the national homeland. (The Armenian diaspora is an interesting example of this concept in that the Armenian population living outside Armenia is larger than that inside the country’s borders.) Another highly relevant concept is hybridity, a term used to denote either the mixing of peoples, or the mixing of cultures or identity positions within a single individual, due to multiple allegiances (for example, living in exile and assimilating, but nonetheless feeling at one with one’s homeland culture). Yet another concept that is useful in this context of understanding global flows is cosmopolitanism, a term that refers to the qualities acquired by individuals who move from nation to nation for work and study, acquiring habits, ideologies, and tastes that are varied and global. Deterritorialization is a concept that suggests separation of people or objects from a traditional home territory. The separation



FIG. 10.7

Morehshin Allahyari, *Marten*, from the series *Material Speculation: Isis*, 2015–2016 (clear resin, oil and microchip, 8.5 × 2 × 4.5")

that produces deterritorialization may occur by force, for example, through the pressures of warfare that drive people from their homeland or which unmoor cherished objects from their traditional sites. The stripping away of national identity or belonging that occurs with deterritorialization can open up new meanings and opportunities for new affiliations, but it is also fraught with tension and conflict over power and rights.

For instance, the International Council of Museums maintains an online database, called the “Emergency Red List,” on which are itemized Syrian objects designated “at risk” due to escalating illegal world trade in cultural goods that have been looted from cultural heritage sites and museums during the war.¹² Syrian archaeologists engaged in the salvage of goods have been described as political actors who risk their lives in the act of documenting looted stolen

items for sale in hopes of creating a trail for their postwar recovery; they are also removing and transporting cultural artifacts from heritage sites to bring them to safety in advance of air strikes, snipers, and smugglers who come from all sides of the conflict. The loss of cultural objects from Syrian heritage sites has been described as “the worst cultural disaster since the Second World War.” State museums in other countries that have acquired these “deterritorialized” objects have come under criticism. Some, including the British Museum, have been quick to insist they are merely safeguarding these treasures until they can be returned.¹³ In a series of works titled *Material Speculation: ISIS*, artist Morehshin Allahyari has used 3D printing to recreate sculptures from the Assyrian and Hatra time that were destroyed by ISIS. Each small replica contains a memory card suspended in oil, on which is preserved data about the lost original.

As we can see, the enhanced potential for global flow is not a universally positive condition. Arjun Appadurai has noted that globalization’s most striking feature is runaway global finance, the circumstance in which thriving global economies drive national economies into the ground. Per capita income has declined in many countries throughout Africa during the era of economic trade liberalization. We live in a world of flows, Appadurai points out, but the benefits are not coeval—that is, they are not equal in timing and duration, or in impact. The circumstances of globalization require that we understand its impact not only or primarily from the perspective of individual or corporate gains, but from the perspective of different communities’ global everyday circumstances, from the ground up.¹⁴

Appadurai proposes a model for understanding globalization across social and cultural realms using the concept of “scapes,” a suffix derived from the geographical metaphor of landscapes. “Scapes” provides a framework for thinking about global flows. An ethnoscape is a group of people of similar ethnicity whose

members move across borders in roles such as refugee, tourist, exile, and guest worker. “Mediascape” describes the global movement of media texts and cultural products within a given frame. Transnational action film, for example, could be discussed as a mediascape to emphasize its global circulation. A technoscape is a framework that contains the complex technological industries that circulate information and services. For example, we might speak of the industrial and cultural “technoscape” of the mobile phone industry’s expanding satellite infrastructure. A financescape is an economic framework in which global capital flows. An ideoscape is made up of the ideologies that circulate with a given set of cultural products, capital, and populations. Analyzing global flow according to “scapes” allows us to critique the mixed and contradictory power relations within a specific cultural and economic phenomenon across different places, rather than seeing the global only and always at the imagined scale of the world as a unitary, complete whole.¹⁵

The World Image

How do we situate ourselves visually in relationship to this vast concept of “the world”? Understanding globalization is necessarily tied to the ways in which the world itself has been visualized and represented iconically as a unitary global entity. One of the key moments in this visualization history came in the 1960s, when U.S. and Soviet space travel produced the first photographic images of Earth as seen from space. Illustrations of the globe have of course been popular for centuries. The globe was a key visual icon used to signify world power by imperial forces such as the British Empire. Yet with the first photographic images of the world as a globe seen from space, images that carried connotations of photographic truth (they were produced by and documented advances in science) launched a new embrace of the world as a unified globe. One of the first images of the globe, titled *Earthrise*, was taken by astronaut William Anders in 1968, during the U.S. Apollo 8 mission. The image, which shows part of the Moon’s surface in the foreground with Earth framed against the darkness of space, was transmitted back to Earth by the crew via television signal. Earth appears partially illuminated, suggesting that it was photographed while rising. The hopeful celestial meaning of this still image of Earth rising was broadcast around the world in a Christmas Eve transmission from the spacecraft to the largest audience that had ever listened to a human voice on television.¹⁶

FIG. 10.8

Earthrise, photograph taken by Apollo 8 crewmember William Anders on December 24, 1968, while orbiting the Moon



The image has been widely described as changing the way in which the world's people saw the planet. Seeing the Moon was amazing, but seeing the Earth, appearing whole and unified, yet small and hopeful in the larger scales of space and time, was both awe-inspiring and humbling. Through the lens of the astronaut, people on Earth saw themselves and their planet as small and receding. In a 2013 tribute to the image and its broadcast, *Time* magazine credits *Earthrise* with the launch of the environmental movement—indeed, with changing the world through its representation as whole, but also as small in the larger scale of the universe—an entity in need of human protection.¹⁷

In 1969, 530 million television broadcast viewers worldwide watched the live telecast of the first human walk on the Moon, performed by U.S. astronaut Neil Armstrong. The image was recorded with a slow-scan camera, transmitted to Earth, then refilmed for commercial television broadcast. Its slow speed and grainy quality give it an intangibly vague and eerie quality. This intangibility is enhanced by the fact that the original magnetic tape was mistakenly destroyed; there is no original footage of the event.

These events fed the idea that we live as one on a unified, shared planet and that entity is in need of protection and care. This ethos was marked by the inauguration of an annual Earth Day in 1970. Yet a photographic image of the Earth in its entirety was still not yet available to the public. Stewart Brand began to lobby in 1970 for NASA to release an image of the Earth seen from space. Brand was founder of the *Whole Earth Catalog*, a compendium of tools and goods for use in the “back to the land” movement, a 1960s counterculture precursor to cyberculture and the web. Obsessed with this idea that an actual photograph of the Earth would reinforce the imperative to respect and protect it, he distributed buttons that asked “Why Haven’t We Seen a Photograph of the Whole Earth Yet?” to such luminaries as Marshall McLuhan, Buckminster Fuller, and members of Congress.¹⁸ When just such an image, later dubbed *The Blue Marble*, was finally released by NASA in 1972, it was quickly appropriated as an icon for the peace movement.

Brand and others thought that such an image would have the unique power to change the worldview of everyone on the planet: “No one would ever perceive things in the same way” after seeing this image, Brand insisted. As geography scholar Denis Cosgrove notes, despite the fact that the *Whole Earth* image was the product of the U.S. imperial Cold War space mission, it prompted a broad popular discourse about world unity.¹⁹ Once the image began to circulate, it was taken up as a sublime icon of global unity. The writer Archibald McLeish wrote poetry about it (“See the world as it truly is, small and blue . . .”), reasserting the image’s role as an icon of global consciousness about war and peace, commerce and natural resources, and other global matters. It was featured on the cover of the *Whole Earth Catalog*. As communication scholar Fred Turner notes, Brand’s ethos, and along with it the *Whole Earth* image, informed the emergence of cyberculture, in which the icon figured as a symbol of the digital utopian vision of the World Wide Web

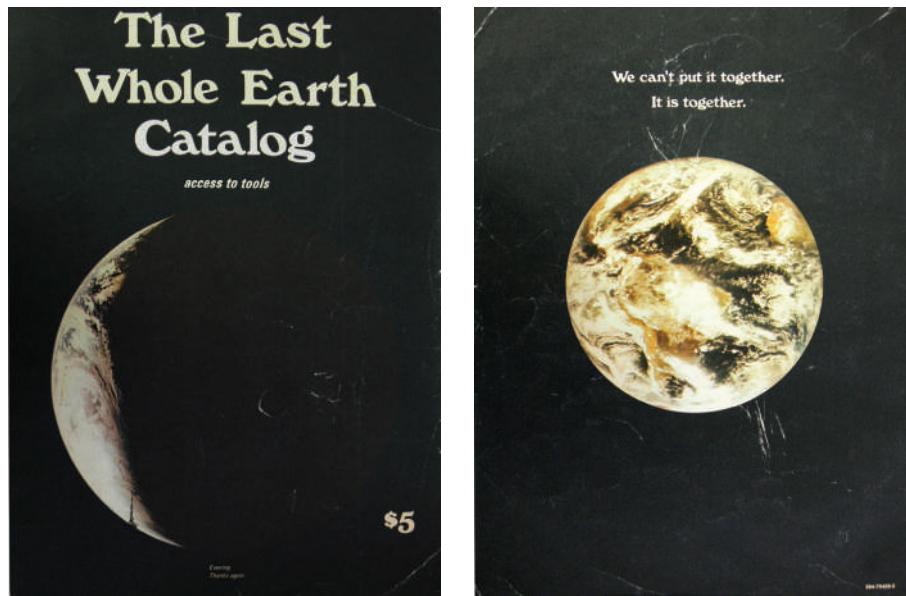


FIG. 10.9
The Last Whole Earth Catalog,
 1971, front and back covers

as a ubiquitous network that would provide connectivity for a future decentralized, harmonious, and free society.²⁰

Satellite technology has been an important feature of these changing ways of seeing the Earth and situating ourselves within it. The development of satellite technology began, as with the Earth images, in the Cold War era and the “space race,” the years during which world powers competed to be the first in space conquest. In 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first satellite to be sent into space. As discussed in Chapter 6, satellites serve as a primary force in communication and visualization practices. Satellites are used to survey land and development, to spy on other nations, to transmit television and news images, and to route telecommunications, in particular mobile phone transmissions. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, more than 8,000 satellites orbited the Earth. Media studies scholar Lisa Parks, who has studied the role of satellites throughout the world, observes that “the globe is crisscrossed by satellite footprints, and the meanings of the televisual are increasingly contingent on them.”²¹ Parks notes that satellites point to a profound paradox of visibility: although we typically do not see or sense them, satellites are virtually everywhere around us outside the globe, in the space beyond our field of vision. From that remote vantage point, they constitute a unique and pervasive relay of looking and power that has many manifestations on the ground, from surveillance to individual communications.

During the 1960s and 1970s, there was great fascination with the ways in which satellite transmission could create an experience of simultaneity in television broadcasting. Live transatlantic satellite newsfeed was introduced in 1962 with a broadcast to Europe and North America by AT&T Telstar. Hosted by legendary news anchor Walter Cronkite, the broadcast showed U.S. and European audiences

at a Chicago Cubs baseball game at Chicago's Wrigley Field and a Washington, D.C., press conference with President John F. Kennedy speaking on nuclear testing and the U.S. dollar's economic devaluation. In the 1970s, the use of live satellite feed became standard for transmitting important news events. Interconnectivity was a primary theme of early uses of satellite in television. For instance, the 1967 BBC program *One World* used satellite technology to broadcast four live births throughout the world. Focused on overpopulation, *One World* deployed a united humanity theme that hearkened back to the Family of Man, a legendary photographic exhibition curated by Edward Steichen that toured thirty-seven countries across six continents during the 1950s. Parks argues that satellites helped to create a "global presence." Liveness and presence, she writes, were "indistinguishable from Western discourses of modernization. . . . Developing nations could only claim themselves as 'modern' if they were in range of American, Western European, or Japanese satellite television signals, earth stations, or networks."²²

Since the 1980s, cable, satellite, and digital platforms have been used to extend "regional" or "local" television programming to communities of viewers across a diaspora. The Kikuyu, estimated to be the largest tribe of Kenyans, has a vast diaspora, with some sixth-generation Kikuyu living outside Kenya. Those living inside Kenya as well as around the globe can view programming from Kikuyu Diaspora Television, a small company broadcasting out of Alabama, through online streaming. In the 1970s, artists associated with the art collective Fluxus, including Willoughby Sharp, Charlotte Moorman, and Nam June Paik, staged satellite art projects in which performers separated by great distances and time zones performed "together" live, linked by satellite transmission, with transmission and broadcast set up in each location. As media studies scholar Nick Couldry explains, the production of "liveness" as a way of experiencing "the real" has been a powerful feature of media since the broadcast television era. The mediated habitus in which live exchanges are highly valued continues in a culture in which mobile phones allow us to engage in instantaneous communication constantly throughout the day.²³

A key feature of the everyday consumption of satellite images is the development of remote sensing, the practice of using satellites and related technology to obtain information about an object or human subject from a distance, without the close contact of conventional photography or on-site observation. Remote sensing involves the convergence of satellite, television, and computer imaging in the production of images from a great distance. Until the 1990s, this practice had been the province of government agencies and the military, which used the technique to spy on enemy states. With the opening up of this technology to private industry, companies began to sell remote sensing satellite imaging programs to individual consumers. In the late 2010s, people who have access to television and the Internet have available to them a broad array of satellite technologies as well as online satellite image databases. Through these technologies, they may imaginatively situate themselves on the globe from the perspective of an Earth-orbiting satellite.

Satellite imaging is ubiquitous, spanning a range of uses, politics, and industries. For instance, weather reporting often shows satellite images, which in turn locate viewers regionally and nationally. But the optics itself is laden with implications about power and meaning. It is not insignificant that viewers have become accustomed, as Jody Berland has noted, to viewing the weather and the skies from the disembodied perspective of looking powerfully down upon the Earth, rather than looking reverently up to the skies.²⁴

Satellite imagery offers the experience of seeing vast landscapes from above, as well as that of identifying one's own location within that landscape. These images provide both the wonder of viewing the Earth with omniscience and the satisfaction of locating your own small place in that world—say, by using Google Earth to identify your neighborhood, your house, and perhaps even your car in the driveway, if you live in a region where Google Earth allows you to search by address. These images are a part of the longer history of modernity and visibility, invoking the early fascination with microscopy and photography in their capacities to reveal to us things too small or too fleeting for the unaided human eye to discern. Satellite images show us our world from a vantage point that very few humans in our lifetimes will ever see (from spacecraft, or from a standpoint on another planet). Such images can be deployed for varied political purposes. For instance, in climate change awareness campaigns, the use of satellite images has been effective in showing melting glaciers, charting before and after changes in the ice. Images such as this one from Reefs at Risk, a project of the nonprofit World Resources Institute, provide evidence of threats to natural environments from human activity such as overfishing, pollution, and coastal development.

Such images dramatically visualize changes in the natural and built environment, making them important historical and political documents of anthropogenic impacts. With these images, we find the legacy of objective photographic truth long associated with photography. Satellites are unmanned vehicles; there is no co-presence of camera or camera operator and object, no connotation of human witnessing.

Google Earth has popularized the satellite view, making this kind of viewing of the world emblematic of the freedom of information available in the digital era. Launched in 2005, Google Earth combines imagery from satellite

FIG. 10.10

Screen shot from *Reefs at Risk in the Coral Triangle Revisited*, Google Earth, 2012



photographs, aerial photographs, and 3D GIS (geographical information system) images. Google Earth's imaging scope is extraordinary, but not all the information provided to the public by Google is made available in the same way. Some critics of the system have noted that Google Earth offers information about landscape and the built environment that may jeopardize national security. For this reason, Google has blurred renderings of locations such as the U.S. White House so that details cannot be accessed, stored, and analyzed for purposes such as plotting terrorist attacks. Google Earth provides more detail for some locations than others, suggesting the relative importance and value of one location over another. Through these kinds of technical choices, Google inscribes a system of value and meaning into its maps. Like globalization itself, choices about where and how to represent parts of the globe in Google Earth show that all locales are not valued equally.

Satellite systems and images are a key aspect of the contemporary surveillance society. Berland calls the global network of government and military satellites our "satellite panopticon" to underscore the fact that satellites constitute a primary system through which governments control and manage human subjects inside and outside national borders, maintaining power relationships by letting us know that we are always potentially under watch. Yet these military-based systems have also been deployed for complex practices by ordinary citizens. GPS (Global Positioning System), a technology that now proliferates in cars, mobile phone apps, and games was initially developed for use by the U.S. Department of Defense. Contemporary use of GPS involves a wide range of tracking and self-tracking capabilities. The reciprocity built into this relationship is an essential aspect of the panoptic mentality, which requires that the subject using the technological system must maintain awareness that his or her every move may be under watch. GPS entails internalization of the panoptic gaze, ensuring conformity to rules. GPS crosses military, science, service, and leisure uses in the United States because the system has been made widely available by the U.S. government, but it is not the only such system in the world. Russia, India, and other countries have similar systems. Each provides comprehensive yet specific mapping data.

The human subjects of the camera image or the painting are positioned at a point relative to the picture or screen world, whether through the use of linear perspective or another spatial system. The human subject who uses GPS is positioned continually at the center of a world, the framework of which is constantly shifting, sometimes relative to a destination. GPS systems help geologists measure volcanic expansion and fault line shifts, biologists track the exact movements of animal life, emergency vehicle drivers find the best route to injured people, and everyday drivers navigate. Unlike the paper map, on which we must guess our current location and trace a possible route with a hesitant tip of the finger, the GPS screen shows us exactly where we are situated at each moment and even may suggest options for how we might best get to our destination. Yet our movements are not solely knowable by us alone; they are part of a larger pool of data in which our passage may

be located and traced, now or later. We might ask: Who, if anyone, masters this world image? What is its scope? How long will the data we generate while using it survive, and in whose hands? What has become of the idea of a “center” of the world image, as coordinates and standpoints are constantly shifting?

Global Television

Television, in its various forms as broadcast, network, cable, narrowcast, and web-based programming, has been a key arena where media images have been entered into global dynamics of flow. In the late twentieth century, television programming was exported from production centers such as studios in the United States to multiple national markets. Between 1978 and 1991, the epitome of global television was *Dallas*, a CBS primetime soap opera about a rich Texas oil family that had aired in over 130 countries by the end of its run. By 2006, ABC had success in a global market with *Ugly Betty*, an adaptation of the popular Colombian telenovela *Yo soy Betty, la fea*. This example demonstrates a reversal of the media center-to-periphery dynamic exemplified by *Dallas*.

The global flow of televisual culture entails not only the transnational circulation of programs, but also the circulation of program formats, a concept and branding model in which television series are not simply broadcast but are remade for different national and regional contexts ranging from Africa, Albania, and Australia to Scandinavia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Media scholars Michael Keane and Albert Moran write that format programming is an engine of transnational television.²⁵ Though program formats are franchised throughout the world, many of them originate in relatively wealthy European countries such as the Netherlands and Great Britain. Program formats are sold to other countries like franchises, using highly popular formulas (such as the game show or reality television), which are sold as packages—licensing agreements with packaged information about previous show iterations and production notes on musical themes, staging, logos, character elements, and target audiences.²⁶ This packaging makes programming decisions easy and keeps production costs low. Thus these formats travel around the globe and are modified for local markets, staying within genre codes while changing to fit local tastes and production budgets. The success of format programming is paradoxical—while the formats are homogeneous, they allow for a broad range of local variation. As media studies scholars Tasha Oren and Sharon Sharaf write, “format adaptations’ distinction from the import of ‘finalized’ media products is sourced in their preservation of local language and culture, allowing ‘native’ producers to adjust the imported formulas to better fit their audiences’ cultural tastes, sensibilities, and expectations.”²⁷

In the context of television news, the paradox of twenty-first-century globalization means that the new economic and information liberalization policies have not created a more democratic flow of information. Rather, “global” news venues like

CNN (Cable News Network) have become a battleground for control over the shaping of world opinion. During the 1980s cable era, the rise of pan-ethnic programming, such as Spanish-language programming aimed at multinational, diasporic audiences, dramatically changed the global map of television audiences. Channels proliferated to serve niche markets, such as language groups, ethnic groups, and taste groups. But there is a profound paradox to this localization that occurred with cable's proliferation of channels. In the 1980s, "niche" markets were (for the most part) globalized, as populations moved around more, dispersing due to war and increased access to air travel and the globalization of education and industry. In a world economy dominated by trade liberalization, education and job markets were no longer limited to national contexts in the same ways.

World television news was globalized in the cable era with CNN International, the English-language network launched by Turner Broadcasting System in 1980. CNN was rebranded in the 1990s to make the network appear less American and more global. By 2008, CNN reached 200 million households and hotels in 200 countries through cable and satellite feed. By the 2010s, its digital feed made the network available anywhere in the world with signal, except in regions with censorship. Launched in 1991, BBC World News, a privately held corporation (BBC is otherwise government-run), currently ranks as one of the most watched television news channels in the world, with an estimated weekly audience of 74 million viewers in 200 countries. Al Jazeera, which came on the global scene in 1996 with funding from the Qatar ruling family, challenged the dominance of Western news venues.

In the early twenty-first century, the "superpower" networks that had controlled late twentieth-century news and media flows were challenged by multiple media outlets, including Al Jazeera. With eighty news bureaus and an estimated 40 million viewers globally, Al Jazeera aimed to reach listeners in and beyond the Middle Eastern diaspora. In 2005, the station launched an English-language satellite news service with twenty-four-hour broadcasting from headquarters in Doha, London, Kuala Lumpur, and Washington, D.C. The Sarajevo-based Al Jazeera Balkans, launched in 2011, airs in three languages: Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian. Yet news globalization is a political process; it does not progress evenly among outlets and nations. For example, the Al Jazeera America news channel, launched in 2013, was closed in 2016.²⁸

When national conflicts can be played out on a global news stage, coverage becomes crucial in generating foreign sentiment and support. "Facts" may be fluidly generated and become harder to verify independently when the information flow is fast and thick but nonetheless highly monitored and restricted. The case of CNN Asia airing in China during March 2008 demonstrates this. When witness reports got out that some Tibetan protesters in China's Tibet Autonomous Region had been killed by Chinese police, reporters seeking information were blocked from the region. Tibetan supporters sent emails with video clips to CNN headquarters,

but the footage of dead bodies was countered by Chinese authorities, who contested the reported facts through state television footage of Tibetan rioters looting and burning Han Chinese stores. A CNN online news account by journalist Hugh Riminton captured this situation as one of “rival images” attempting to shape global news. CNN Asia coverage of the protests was blacked out in China, further limiting China’s already heavily restricted news broadcasts.

This constant reshaping of global news broadcasting demonstrates how the national and the global are in constant tension, with, for example, private and state-supported news reporters using global media to shape international opinion, and global actors (such as United Nations Human Rights Council researchers) struggling to work within specific nation-states. Although media’s increased globalization may erode the centrality of national programming, the media still tends to affirm national ideologies and identity. Concepts of the nation, what it means to be an American or Chinese or French citizen, are often an integral part of programming that traverses national boundaries.

The Global Flow of Film

Globalization and digitalization have changed production, distribution, and finance in the world’s film industries. In the early 2000s, the Hollywood industry was still a dominant player in global film production, but its influence began to erode in the global film market. Not only do films circulate in increasingly global networks to increasingly global audiences today, but the financing of films is now much more based on transnational rather than national finance. Thus, even cultural products that appear to be “national” are constituted through global finance and marketing networks. Many “Hollywood” productions are in fact multinational coproductions, as are many productions in Europe, and most Hollywood studios are owned by foreign multinational corporations. Columbia Entertainment is owned by the Japanese multinational Sony Corporation, for example. In addition, some nations, such as Canada and France, attempt to mediate the dominance of the U.S. entertainment industry by promoting national production. Contemporary global image flow and the dynamics of image generation, restriction, and appropriation show that while the U.S. culture industry is still a key source of entertainment programming globally, its influence is waning. It has been challenged by shifting audiences, increasingly homogenized content (such as endlessly serialized action movies), changing financial models, and the convergence of the independent and commercial film markets. Finally, piracy through DVDs, torrent client sites, and sites like YouTube whittles away at Hollywood’s revenue dominance.

Hollywood’s relative decline is also the result of enormously popular diasporic popular culture, from Hong Kong cinema and Telemundo telenovelas to Bollywood cinema and Korean pop culture (K-pop), which are forms of media produced not only for global diasporas but also for mixed audiences that include



FIG. 10.11

Polish publicity poster for the Bruce Lee Hong Kong kung-fu film *Enter the Dragon*, dir. Robert Clouse, 1973

viewers who are not members of the diaspora. These texts are distributed widely through global platforms and social networks. For example, Korean singer and performer Psy reached unprecedented international superstardom with *Gangnam Style*, a video that registered over a billion views on YouTube in 2012–13, prompting publicity around UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon asking the singer to work with him on public outreach.²⁹

Hong Kong cinema provides an important and enduring example of how cultural forms are created in multinational and transnational contexts and travel globally. The Hong Kong action films made in the 1980s and 1990s were produced by a broad range of filmmakers from Japan, Taiwan, mainland China, the Philippines, and Australia were enormously popular and influential to action film styles internationally. Many Hong Kong kung-fu films, which were first released for theatrical distribution and later as direct-to-video productions, DVDs, and digital downloads, achieved enormous global popularity.³⁰ By the late 1990s, the Hong Kong film industry's

influence on Hollywood was clear, as Hong Kong's stars and directors began working in Hollywood and mainstream Hollywood films, such as *The Matrix* (1999), drew explicitly on Hong Kong cinema.

Hollywood no longer has the global monopoly on popular film culture that it had in the mid-twentieth century. Some of the dominant global film industries are named after Hollywood, such as Bollywood (the Hindi-language sector of the Indian film industries) and Nollywood (the Nigerian film industry of the digital era, which releases its films directly to DVD). But these industries are not derivative of the Hollywood production model, except insofar as all three can be described as derivative of one another. The global climate of appropriation takes the form of transnational genre- and talent-swapping in which the trades are never equivalent in kind or value and the notion of original form is no longer as pertinent as it once was in systems of taste and value.

Bollywood, an industry which turned 100 in 2013, refers to neither a place nor a national cinema exactly, but to one of India's seven regional cinemas: the Mumbai (Bombay)-based industry which produces films in Hindi, or Hindustani, and increasingly in English for a broad Indian diasporic audience and for non-Indian audiences. Bollywood is the world's biggest filmmaking entity. Producing about a thousand films a year, Bollywood has an output twice that of Hollywood. Cinema has been enormously popular throughout India for a century. Whereas in Bollywood a feature may cost \$1–2 million to produce, in Hollywood that figure is closer to \$40 million. In the 1920s, more than three quarters of the films watched in India were made in the United States, but by the 1980s

Indian audiences were consuming their own regional productions as well as a mix of productions from Hollywood, Hong Kong, and other industries. The flow of cinema culture goes in multiple directions and is not coeval—it does not happen at the same time, in the same ways, or with the same kind or degree of benefit for those involved. Bollywood exports are strong even as films are locally popular. Bollywood films are consumed by viewers not only in India, but also throughout the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Russia (where Bollywood films were popular even during the Soviet period, when U.S. films were banned), and among diasporic South Asian populations in Europe, Australia, and the United States. Bollywood films have been largely genre-based, with similar elements repeated from film to film, including lavish musical and dance scenes, melodramatic love stories, and the themes of father–son conflict, redemption and the assertion of moral values, revenge, and happy endings.

Although until the 1990s Bollywood productions were regarded as low in production values compared to those of Hollywood despite lavish set production, the situation has changed in part due to changes in state and private funding structures. Indian banks, formerly prohibited from investing in films, are now allowed to do so. New technologies and the introduction of talent from other industries have also intensified. Hong Kong’s film industry experienced an exodus of talent after its 1997 transition from a British Crown colony to one of China’s special administrative regions. Bollywood and Hollywood were able to recruit many of the Hong Kong industry’s top figures. This turn toward globalization of talent led to further cross-appropriation, with genres, styles, and talent circulating between Hollywood, India, Hong Kong, and China. This is not to say that Hollywood has become more diverse overall. The 2015 Bunche Report and other sources tell us that 94 percent of industry heads are white and 100 percent are male, and these statistics are echoed at other levels of the industry, including talent. White American and European male actors dominate the top credits and are paid the most, with minority talent and women underrepresented on every front except in the casting of racial and gender types and at the lowest-paid rungs of the industry. Globalization of the film industry economy and the addition of some top talent from around the world have not brought overall gender, ethnic, and racial diversity or equity to the Hollywood industry.

The Nigerian film industry, or Nollywood, presents a very different picture from that of Hollywood, Bollywood, Hong Kong, or China. In the digital 2000s, Nollywood emerged from its status since the 1960s as a small celluloid-based film industry to become a multi-billion dollar industry that produces over a thousand films a year. Filmed and edited on digital media, these are released directly to DVD. Nollywood’s huge production output is attributable to small, handheld video

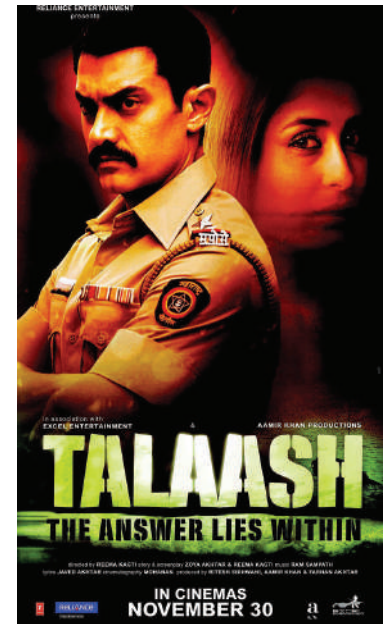


FIG. 10.12
Poster for Bollywood feature
Talaash: The Answer Lies Within, dir.
Reema Kagti, 2012



FIG. 10.13

Director Kunde Fulani (at screen) on the set of Nollywood production *Dazzling Mirage*, 2014, photograph by Connor Ryan

cameras, especially the HD camera, straightforward computer-based digital editing, DVD formatting, and global marketing. Nollywood features have supplanted U.S. films at the top of the DVD distribution market not only in Nigeria but in many other African nations as well. The Nollywood industry provides an important new model of entrepreneurship and popular visual culture production. Whereas Bollywood gained success through lavish features with long production processes, which then made profits through video release, Nollywood production

remains relatively low budget and quickly profitable through direct-to-DVD production and marketing.

The growth of the Bollywood, Nollywood, and the Chinese and Hong Kong film industries are indicative of circumstances under globalization and trade liberalization in which

cinemas formerly understood as national are now global and diasporic in scope. These changes reflect a range of national and cultural influences, and these film cultures appeal to a populace that studies, works, travels, and lives across nations and between continents. Not only are the films transnational productions for which finance and distribution are characterized by global flow, but their audience members are in many cases transnational subjects whose lives have been constituted through global flows.

Social Movements, Indigenous Media, and Visual Activism

The global movement of people and images in the early twenty-first century is increasingly complex, with immigrant, refugee, and diasporic communities growing and changing in their dynamics. Media images express the geographic dispersal of peoples, the breakdown of nation-states, the hybridization of cultures, and intensified concerns about national security and autonomy in a post-Cold War world in which borders are ever more desperately protected through surveillance drones, walls, and securitization.

Global social movements have arisen in the last decade that are fueled by social injustice and aided by social media that help ideas, images, and strategies circulate quickly and virally. When the Egyptian Revolution and Occupy Wall Street rose up in 2011, and the Arab Spring spread throughout the Middle East, digital communication technologies were a key force in the dissemination of ideas. Shifting power dynamics also allowed for large crowds to congregate in public spaces, such as Cairo's Tahrir Square, in ways previously unimaginable.



FIG. 10.14

Crowd at Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt, February 9, 2011

The connections between these social movements demanding democratic rights throughout the Middle East, southern Europe, and the United States have largely been understood as enabled by digital social networks, in what information sociologist Manuel Castells has called a “rhizomatic” revolution. Castells sees such networked movements, even if they have not lasted as hoped, as a new form of activism. Castells states that while social movements have always been “dependent on the existence of specific communication mechanisms: rumors, sermons, pamphlets and manifestos,” interactive and self-configurable communication strategies allow movements to be less hierarchal and more participatory.³¹ The political repression these movements have endured raises the question of the lasting effects of social networking in contexts in which ordinary people don’t have access to jobs, safety, or the means to care for their families. Nevertheless, the impressive image of enormous crowds gathered in Cairo has remained a powerful and hopeful visual icon of possibility, marking a moment in which people congregated in solidarity, in a field of gazes with the demand to be seen rather than hidden or surveilled.

Such moments indicate shifts in what can be seen and heard and what is rendered intelligible in global public discourse. The political theorist Jacques Rancière proposed the concept of the “distribution of the sensible” to describe how power relations, enacted through sense perception, designate that which is visible (and heard/understood) and that which cannot be seen. Politics thus creates a division (a “partage”) not between those with power and those without, but between that which can be seen/understood and that which can’t.³² In Rancière’s words, this means that “artistic practices are ‘ways of doing and making’ that intervene in the general distribution of these ways of doing and making as well as in the relationships they maintain to models of being and forms of visibility.” In other words, artistic activity and visual activism trouble the boundaries of the sensible, rendering visible and heard the images and voices of those who have been designated as invisible, their demands defined as “noise.” Rancière’s formulation can help us understand the importance of gathering in a public square as an act of asserting



FIG. 10.15
Zapatista dolls, 2009

the right of people without social power to visibility. Many of the artistic and cultural practices we have discussed in this book are about this right.

Globalized networks have enabled political movements to disseminate their ideas and build support throughout the world, thus constituting global communities of support. The Zapatista National Liberation Army/Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), a Mexican political movement centered in the Chiapas region, was in the forefront of local movements that have generated global support through the Internet and social media platforms. The Zapatistas, many of whom are *campesinos* (peasant farmers) of Mayan descent, began an insurgency in 1994 and created alternative forms of government in the Chiapas

area to protest the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and support indigenous peoples' rights. Zapatista supporters disseminated information from the rebels to a global group of supporters. This involved both high-tech and low-tech networks in which messages were hand-carried to those with computer access. The Zapatistas thus have long used digital means to fight for indigenous rights and control of the land and against the neoliberal policies and authoritarian rule of the Mexican government, especially objecting to its relationship with global capitalism. The broad global vision of civil society they have proposed is a view that has resonated through social media with other political movements around the globe, including anti-globalization activists working against World Trade Organization policies.

Like the Black Panthers of the 1960s, the Zapatistas use style as a key factor in crafting their global image. To mask their identities in the face of Mexican government oppression, they wear black masks, much like the Guerrilla Girls discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, to assert group allegiance. Images of figures with black ski masks (*pasamontañas*) or red bandanas (*paliacates*) have come to signify indigenous political struggles. The Zapatistas have used this symbolism to create an image for their movement, although its meanings have traveled far beyond their causes. One can purchase tourist souvenirs of Zapatista dolls throughout Latin America. These curios are sold alongside other indigenous crafts. The symbol of the masked guerrilla has also cropped up in trendy stores, such as London's Box Fresh.

The Zapatistas also participated in a sophisticated discourse about image-making and the politics of indigenous people's relationship to tourist images, prior to the era in which mobile phone cameras became ubiquitous. For instance, Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, the *nom de guerre* of the Zapatista political leader until 2014, was known to take cameras from visitors and turn them back on them. In reversing the gaze, Marcos was making a point about indigenous people as a

present and living force, as against the history of images of indigenous people as merely “images in museums, tourist guides, crafts advertising” in which the indigenous are seen as the Other, “an anthropological curiosity or colorful detail of a remote past.”³³ As George Yúdice writes, “Marcos proposes to establish a different kind of relation by turning the gaze onto the spectators and photographers.”³⁴ The Zapatistas make their movement a global and local one, using art, music, and poetry online, in performances, and in tourist shop sales. As Yúdice writes, “the Zapatistas’ expert handling of the electronic media shows that there is no necessary contradiction between technological modernization and grassroots mobilization.”³⁵ By 2006, the Mexican government tacitly accepted the Zapatista campaign, deeming it good for tourism. In a counterappropriation strategy, the government seemed to accept the Zapatista culture war as simply a matter of style and fashion, with sales of Marcos mugs, T-shirts, and bumper stickers simply another boon to Mexican tourism.

Artist Ricardo Dominguez, however, emphasizes that the Zapatistas are “those who take into their hearts the poetic gesture,” using “words as war, not words for war.” An artist involved in hacktivism and electronic civil disobedience from its earliest instances in the 1990s with the Digital Zapatistas project,³⁶ Dominguez has combined technology, geography, and the built environment to stage resistance. For example, in the B.A.N.G. Lab collaborative project called the Transborder Immigrant Tool, Dominguez and colleagues Micha Cárdenas, Brett Stalbaum, Paula Poole, Amy Sara Carroll, and Elle Mehrmand employed Stalbaum’s Virtual Hiker Algorithm to create a GPS mobile phone app designed to help a person crossing the desert borderland dividing the United States and Mexico to locate potable water and thereby avoid death by dehydration.

Of the roughly 150 people who die each year attempting to cross into the United States from Mexico, 85 percent are Mexican and 5 percent are Guatemalan and Honduran. Most are young men. Many deaths go uncounted as the region is difficult to navigate; corpses are in many cases discovered years after death. Increased border policing since 2010 (the year death counts began) has resulted in more deaths, as the routes have by necessity become more circuitous. Migrants enter into even more arid and rough landscapes in order to avoid patrols and surveillance. The Transborder Immigrant Tool project was described by the B.A.N.G. Lab collective as a poetic gesture of symbolic efficacy: the phone app was never, to anyone’s knowledge, successfully used. Yet the FBI targeted

FIG. 10.16

The Transborder Immigrant Tool, mobile phone with GPS application, Electronic Disturbance Theater (EDT) 2.0/b.a.n.g. lab, 2012





FIG. 10.17

Screen shot from *Never Alone* (*Kisima Ingitchujua*) video game, Upper One Games, 2014

Dominguez for investigation of the project as a possible violation of national security. The work is a reminder of peoples' struggles for the right to make art as political expression as well as for economic

autonomy and survival in a globalizing culture in which, paradoxically, borders are, for many, harder to cross than ever before.

In the struggles of indigenous populations for cultural and economic autonomy, digital media has opened up new cultural genres. For instance, video game culture has been a site of indigenous media production. The *Never Alone* game, developed in 2014 by Upper One Games in Anchorage, Alaska, shows a Native Iñupiaq girl and her Arctic fox companion as they move through Arctic landscapes, struggle against blizzards, and solve a series of puzzles about how to continue. The narration is in Iñupiaq, and the game explains aspects of traditional life. Importantly, this interactive game invites users to play the role of and situate themselves as the native Alaskan girl. The player must learn aspects of Arctic life, such as hunkering down in a storm, to progress in the game. Video games are also used as a venue for preserving and narrating cultural myths in East Africa, where Kiro'o Games uses the format to animate Cameroonian myths. Faced with low funding and irregular access to electricity, the studio used solar power and crowdfunding campaigns to create its first game, *Aurion: Legacy of the Kori-Odan*, a story of ancestral powers in which players assume the role of a traditional ruler, Enzo Kori-Odan, who uses the Aurion power granted him by his ancestors to regain control of his kingdom.

The Global Museum and Contests of Culture

Culture's global flow has intersected with postindustrial economies in the twenty-first century to produce global cultural tourism. Art as cultural capital and art museums as cultural icons have become key factors in the transformation of some new urban centers into global tourist destinations. Creative economies—economies based on cultural production, design industries and business, artistic institutions, and forms of production that are based on creative ideas and services rather than the industrial production of goods—have emerged in tandem with networked societies, postindustrial economies, gentrification, and service economies. In this context, culture has emerged as a key economic engine for urban centers,

sometimes realized through high-profile architectural projects and promoted as a form of tourism. The globalization of the museum, and the rise of the museum franchise, is a relatively recent phenomenon that epitomizes this trend.

The emblem of museum globalization as the franchise is the Guggenheim Museum, which began expanding out from its New York base (where the museum is defined by its signature building, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1959) in the 2000s, to Venice, Berlin, Las Vegas, and Guadalajara. While many of these branches closed after the 2008 financial crisis, the Guggenheim has plans for a museum in Abu Dhabi. The signature branch of the museum franchise is the Guggenheim Bilbao, completed in 1997, which transformed the northern Spanish city into a world culture destination. The building, designed by Los Angeles-based global architect Frank Gehry, has an enormous global appeal now dubbed the “Bilbao effect.” This “effect” involves the power of architectural design and institutions of culture to economically revitalize a region. Bilbao, formerly an industrial city, was transformed into a “world-class” culture destination when the Guggenheim opened. As architecture scholar Shelley Hornstein notes, the building emerged as a landmark, a destination for cultural pilgrimage.³⁷ The Guggenheim signaled the museum’s identity through its commissioning of Gehry to design not only the Bilbao site but also several other branches, including the Abu Dhabi museum. Gehry’s signature style of curved metallic forms has helped brand the museum. For many involved, the construction of museums such as the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi is ultimately very little about preserving the national art that such a museum might house. Indeed, the art itself is from all over the world and not national in its scope. Rather, it is more about selling the city as a participant in a new global creative economy and attracting tourist businesses to a global market in world-class art viewing as a form of consumption that marks a city as a global center.

Gehry is known for his postmodern architectural designs: his former home in Santa Monica, California, which is comprised of layers of industrial materials such as corrugated



FIG. 10.18
Guggenheim Bilbao, 1997,
designed by Frank Gehry

FIG. 10.19
Model of Guggenheim Abu Dhabi,
designed by Frank Gehry



sheet metal wrapped around an otherwise conventional structure, is an icon of postmodern architecture. Ironically, his Bilbao and Abu Dhabi designs, as well as his design for the Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown Los Angeles, are more modern than postmodern. These designs are not contextual or referential of other styles, as most postmodern architecture is. The shiny roofs and curving shapes of the Guggenheim Bilbao and Abu Dhabi are not specific to these cities, but instead reference the Gehry brand. They are intended as universal signifiers of wealth and extravagance. The franchise look is usually associated with cheesiness, not classiness: think McDonalds, with its tacky arches, or 7-Eleven, with its logo radiating cheap convenience. However, the globalizing art world franchise look relies on signifiers of opulence, bold lines and shapes, and costly, shiny materials. Ironically, museum buildings designed by famous architects have almost all been criticized for being more about architecture than the display of art. The Guggenheim Bilbao, for instance, has curved walls and slanted forms that are not conducive to the exhibition of art.

The use of museums to turn urban centers into creative global economies has proliferated over the past two decades throughout Europe, Asia, and the United States. This trend has emerged in the Middle East as well, where cultural tourism is seen as a potential future replacement for oil-based economies, or petro-capital. For example, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), one of the world's largest oil producers and home to a population three quarters of whom are expatriates, is establishing a large cultural tourism complex alongside a satellite campus of New York University, luxury condos, and a golf course. This complex of several museums (including the Zayed National Museum and a performing arts center designed by Zaha Hadid) is being constructed on the man-made Saadiyat Island, a name that means "happiness" in Arabic. In 2006, it was announced that the Louvre would lend its name to a new museum, the Louvre Abu Dhabi, for which it would be recompensed \$900 million. French architect Jean Nouvel, who designed the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, was chosen to design the building, which appears to be isolated as if surrounded by a moat and exists in a kind of microclimate, removed from the rest of the city. The design mixes Arab architectural style with European form. Like many of the UAE's lavish new structures, the building radiates luxury and invites speculative fantasies of future worlds.

As we discussed earlier, the history of museums has largely been one of imperial collections, in which colonial powers have amassed large national collections through colonization, exploration, and war. The major museum collections of the world, often referred to as "universal" museums, were established in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe and the United States, with the British Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian, and the Musée du Louvre the icons of large artistic and cultural collections of art history, ancient art, and archaeological artifacts. In the simultaneous shift toward museum franchises and the purchasing of museum brands by wealthy Arab states, a new global creative economy



FIG. 10.20

Pyramid at the Louvre, 1989,
designed by I. M. Pei

has changed this dynamic. This global “sharing” can potentially decentralize the distribution of the world’s great artworks.

However, we can also see this trend as a means of economic and ideological survival in a globalizing economy for vast government-funded institutions with strong site-specific, iconic importance to the world. The Louvre, which began as a collection by the royal family, opened to the public in 1793. Keeping with the democratic principles of the French Revolution, it made valuable artworks formerly owned by the monarchy accessible to citizens of all classes. By 2014, the Louvre drew over 9 million visitors a year. The Louvre is vast, having been constructed over eight centuries through many additions, including a fortress, a dungeon, and a series of palaces. In 1989, French President François Mitterrand commissioned modernist architect I. M. Pei to create a glass and steel pyramid in the central courtyard. A radical redesign of the museum’s traditional buildings, the pyramid created an entrance into an underground, museum-inspired shopping mall.

The Louvre Abu Dhabi is not technically a branch of the Louvre, but a separate museum that is “renting” the Louvre brand until 2037.³⁸ By lending its name, the Louvre continues the tradition of architectural pastiche, the adding on of structures and works to a collection begun by royalty and turned to the goals of benevolence in which the spaces and artifacts of the world’s high culture, from France and beyond, are made available to a vast public of everyday citizens globally. The UAE acquires the status of high culture by displaying a piece of the Louvre, not only through showing “blue chip” artworks from the global art market but also through the display of a building bearing the Louvre’s brand name. Nearby, Qatar is also pursuing a cultural tourism project, though more focused on regional art. This is an instance of what some globalization advocates call a “win-win” situation in which globalization allows the “have nots” to benefit along with the “haves”—the Louvre gets an infusion of capital into its Paris museum while Abu Dhabi, formerly without world-class art, gets its own collections and architectural sites.

Yet to see this situation as reflecting a sharing of cultures between the West and Middle East would be to accept a Disney-like fairytale version of global fine art that masks the political reality. There is far more to this situation than the



FIG. 10.21

GULF and the Illuminator, action at the Guggenheim Museum by Global Ultra Luxury Faction (GULF), 2016

stunning starchitect-designed buildings and circulating art collections that meet the eye. The art and buildings are signifiers of wealth and knowledge, but the

links that make this visual and material globalization of culture possible include a global oil market, an expatriate citizenry of business workers, and a constant flow of migrant workers who labor day and night to build the structures. The Abu Dhabi cultural project is being constructed by workers, largely from South Asia, who are effectively indentured with few rights at low pay.

This situation of exploited labor has activated protests aimed at exposing the relationship of art and labor. The building of the Guggenheim Museum in New York in particular has been the focus of protests by artists and activists, largely through the Gulf Labor Coalition, which demanded that the museum pay decent wages to the workers building its Abu Dhabi museum. These artist-activists used the New York Guggenheim building, with its famous modern design, to stage

protests, something it is uniquely well suited for with its central atrium, from which flyers, pamphlets, and mock dollar bills can be dropped. The coalition includes many artists whose work is owned by the Guggenheim. In April 2016, when negotiations with the museum broke down, the GULF (Global Ultra Luxury Faction) artist group (an offshoot of Gulf Labor Coalition) pro-

jected images of the trustees onto the exterior of the building along with protest slogans and the word “Mayday” in many languages.³⁹

Artists have also engaged with this set of paradoxes in their work. In this photograph by artist Connie Samaras, we see figures in a boat on the man-made Burj Khalifa (formerly Burj Dubai) Lake. Are the figures in the boat tourists or wealthy residents at leisure? Neither. They are workers repairing the world’s largest choreographed fountain system. The fountain fronts a landmark known as “The Address,” a downtown hotel and apartment complex in which residents live beneath the world’s tallest tower, the artificial lake’s fountain spurting like an oil

FIG. 10.22

Connie Samaras, *Workers Checking Fountain Nozzles I*, from the series *After the American Century*, 2009 (archival pigment print)



strike at their doorstep. Showing us neither the building's grand peak nor its symbolic geiser, Samaras invites us to notice instead the ever-present migrant workers, figures who are rendered small and marginal by the shiny futuristic fantasy landscape that requires their constant attention to keep the image of wealth going strong. They make possible the new techno-fantasy image of global wealth that Dubai and Abu Dhabi's stunning new built environments have come to represent for the world.

A photographer strongly identifying with the notion of "speculative landscapes," Samaras interprets the built environment as a text that speaks a speculative science fiction fantasy about the future. She shows this image's cracks by looking at the time when the environment is under construction, serviced by the ever-changing army of migrant workers housed in crude barracks and bussed in around the clock to work in shifts. The photograph is part of *After the American Century*, a photographic and video series that Samaras shot following the 2008 economic downturn to document the vision of global wealth paradoxically rising in Dubai while much of Europe and North America halted development. The phrase draws from a statement by Henry Luce, founder of *Life*, who announced in 1941 that we were living in "the American century," an episteme marked by the international popularity of American culture, which made the world favorable to American economic and political interests. In the book *After the American Century*, author Brian T. Edwards traces the new routes of cultural exchange that have risen up across the Middle East in the twenty-first century. Shaped by the digital turn, these routes cross cities such as Cairo, Casablanca, and Tehran, rendering North America more interdependent with, and dependent upon, Arab and African cultural narratives, productions, and wealth.⁴⁰

The cultural expansion of museums into Abu Dhabi, as well as numerous American universities into Abu Dhabi, Qatar, and Dubai (which includes branches of New York University, Northwestern, Carnegie Mellon, Georgetown, Texas A&M, Virginia Commonwealth, and University College London), presents an exception to a dominant political trend. Middle Eastern nations have expressed a profound distrust of Western political and economic intentions in the region, and the United States and Europe have in many instances cast Middle Eastern nations and people as national security threats. The Abu Dhabi Guggenheim and Louvre are certainly major icons of the new "borderlessness" of global trade liberalization and cultural exchange, but these icons hold deeply limited and ironic meanings concerning who experiences these shifts as expanded opportunity and greater freedom.

We live in an era marked both by the opening of borders to trade, travel, and cultural exchange and by increased surveillance, monitoring, and the limiting of passage across those same borders. Even as trade flow across them increases, population flow is curtailed. Battles over natural resources are played out in the name of democratic freedom "for all" (not simply imperial right of ownership), making

these new cultural icons of globalization function differently than simply top-down purveyors of Western values to ignoble “others.” This cultural movement is situated in the Anthropocene, an epoch that includes natural resource depletion and the enhanced flow of goods, including art, that came out of modernity’s industrial expansion in the “American century.”

The franchise model indicates a broader trend toward a global network of display. But this ideal has met with challenges. It is no accident that new museum global franchises are coincident with demands by Peru, South Africa, and Greece that Western museums return artifacts looted from them. There have been long histories of Western museums holding not only looted artifacts but also native remains within their collections. For example, for a century the Paris Musée del’Homme held the remains of Saartje (or Sarah) Baartman, a Khoisan woman. Baartman was taken to London in 1810 from the eastern cape of South Africa, where she had been a slave for a Dutch family. Her owner’s brother had enticed Sarah to make the journey by promising her wealth. He put her body on display in French sideshows and society events, hawking her as an anatomical curiosity on the basis of her buttocks and labia (described as unusually large). This 1810 caricature of Baartman lampoons this characterization, as a rival British political coalition was called the “Broad Bottom Ministry.”

Following a public and legal scandal in which it was charged that her display constituted a form of human bondage (the Slave Trade Act had been passed three years earlier), Baartman was taken to Paris, where she was displayed by an animal trainer and came to the attention of French naturalists, including Georges Cuvier, who studied her living human form. After her 1805 death from smallpox, her remains were displayed in the Musée del’Homme until 1974, when

they were put in storage in part as a response to objections to their display.⁴¹ Efforts to have Baartman’s body returned and buried according to Khoisan tradition were resisted until 2002, when President Nelson Mandela of South Africa made a successful plea to France for her body’s repatriation. Her body parts were returned with the exception of her brain, which had disappeared from the collection. The Baartman story is one of racism and objectification undergirded by slavery and colonization, in which the overall project of the museum is implicated.

Artists have often worked within the museum to expose their histories of colonial display and collecting. In 1992–1993, artists Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña performed *Couple in the Cage* at museums, presenting themselves as Amer-indians from an undiscovered island in the Gulf of Mexico called Guatimau (they planned their performance to coincide with the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus’s arrival in the Americas).

FIG. 10.23

“A Pair of Broad Bottoms,” a caricature by William Heath, 1810 (etching)





FIG. 10.24
Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West, performance by Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco, 1993

In this biting critique, the artists dressed as a “native” couple housed in a cage for museum display, performing “traditional” tasks such as making voodoo dolls and watching television, and for a small donation they would dance or tell stories in a made-up language. Two guards were stationed near them, and a set of wall panels gave information about their (fictive) island. The artists conceived of this living diorama of racialized display as an over-the-top satire, but they found that many visitors took it at face value. The performance was made into a documentary, *The Couple in the Cage: A Guatinaui Odyssey* (1993), which turned the gaze on the museum visitors. That their preposterous performance was read literally and uncritically by museum and gallery visitors of the 1990s is troubling evidence of the lack of critical insight in art gallery audiences, who were comfortable with the convention of placing “primitive” peoples on display.

The collecting practices of so-called universal museums were shaped in part by acquisitions made under colonialism, a relationship of domination that helped to rationalize colonial proprietary rights to a colony’s cultural production. Proprietary rights to art and artifacts stolen during the colonial era continue to be negotiated. There have been numerous cases of restitution and demands for the return of artifacts, many centering on legal versus moral rights and competing claims of sovereign ownership. The Metropolitan Museum in New York has holdings obtained during American industrial expansion into foreign regions, and the British Museum in London has an extensive collection of colonial cultural productions. War and imperial expansion have created opportunities throughout history for the illicit acquisition of foreign artworks. This practice has been hard to document due to the chaos of warfare, in which art repositories are not just targeted for destruction (as a means of wiping out a culture), as we noted earlier, but also physically appropriated by enemy forces, either to be sold on a black market or displayed as signifiers of imperial acquisition.

Ownership battles have raged concerning artifacts such as the Elgin Marbles, sections of a 500-foot sculptural frieze (or wall relief) from the Parthenon in Greece. The British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Lord Elgin, removed these works



FIG. 10.25

Athina Rachel Tsangari, *Reflections*, 2009 (installation view); large-scale depictions of Kore (statues of women) projected on the Acropolis Museum, Athens, Greece, June 2009, during opening of building designed by Bernard Tschumi

from the Parthenon in the early 1800s and then sold them to the British Museum. For two centuries, the British Museum argued that it could not return the Elgin Marbles for various reasons: because Greece had no proper location in which to display them, and if all art acquired under such terms were returned, the

world's museums would be gutted. In 2009, however, the Greek government opened the new Acropolis Museum, designed by Swiss-American architect Bernard Tschumi to provide a space for the full Parthenon frieze. In the current display at the Acropolis Museum, the original parts of the frieze owned by Greece are on display, situated along the top of a wall as they would have appeared on the original Parthenon (which stands just 900 feet away), with plaster replicas of the sections still held

by the British Museum inserted in ways that signal their absence. At its opening, the Acropolis Museum was dubbed “a serious rebuttal” to the British Museum’s position.⁴² But the Elgin Marbles have not been returned.

In recent decades, the Getty Museum and other institutions have returned some artifacts to their places of origin in an attempt to recognize, belatedly, that Western institutions are not the rightful repository of the world’s cultural gems, particularly when those gems were acquired through domination. North American anthropological and natural history museums have, after protests by Native Americans, returned Indian artifacts and bones to tribes, recognizing their importance to local traditions and the importance of proper burial of bodily remains. As in the case of Baartman, to strip a body of its cultural meaning in the service of scientific knowledge is now widely regarded as a violation of global human rights. This position came about after the Holocaust, when it became clear that not only were humans killed because of their cultural identity, sexual preference, and mental capacity, they were also subject to experimentation and use of their body parts in industry, a practice rationalized by the claim of scientific and industrial gain. There continue to be legal cases in which art looted by the Nazis from the collections and galleries of European Jews is returned to the owners’ descendants. It is now widely accepted that to appropriate, displace, and display artifacts, humans, or objects is to strip them and their owners of the human right to self-determination. The discourse of sovereignty and local rights is a strong force within the context of the global circulation of culture.

Contemporary “universal” museums can also expand their collections in ways that reflect on these histories. The intersections of art and museums with the histories of colonialism and the economics of petro-capitalism and indentured labor that we have seen in many of the previous examples converge in the work of African



FIG. 10.26

Romuald Hazoumè, *La Bouche du Roi*, 2005 (installation view of work composed of petrol cans, photographs, film, and other found objects)

artist Romuald Hazoumè, who lives in the West African country of Benin. In his work, Hazoumè recrafts the ubiquitous portable plastic gas cans of his native country into African masks and other sculptural forms, playing off the way that the spout and handle of the cans resemble faces. Referring to the ways that Africa has become the dumping ground for the refuse of developed nations, Hazoumè's work acknowledges the bricolage culture of its residents, who repurpose and reuse these plastic cans that are part of a black market in oil between neighboring Nigeria and Benin and then dumped in Benin.

His large installation, *La Bouche du Roi* (*The Mouth of the King*), the title of which refers to a port from which slaves were transported from Africa across the Atlantic, was acquired by the British Museum in 2007 in honor of the 200th anniversary of the British Parliament's abolition of the Atlantic slave trade. In this work, Hazoumè remakes an eighteenth-century Liverpool slave ship, the *Brookes*, with the gas cans standing in for the slaves it held. In connecting the history of slavery with the contemporary economies of oil, inequality, and exploitation, the work reminds viewers that the intersecting economies of slavery and colonialism have their contemporary inflections and legacies.

Refugees and Borders

Global politics are rife with contradictions, involving desperation and hope, and are built out of oppression as well as liberatory aspirations. One common narrative about digital media and the network society is that we now live in a world in which distance has been bridged by communication technologies. But the ideal of a global world without borders does not match social reality. Mobility may be easier technologically speaking, but the reality is that borders have tightened since 2001. Millions of people flee war, violence, persecution, and natural disaster each year, leaving their home countries in hopes of finding safer haven. In 2016, there



FIG. 10.27

Aerial photograph of AFAD temporary sheltering center where Syrian people live in the Suruç district of Şanlıurfa Province, Turkey, as shared in a Twitter feed January 24, 2015

was a two-decade record high of 45 million refugees worldwide, with fifty of the largest refugee camps housing almost 2 million of these individuals stuck in transit to their hoped-for destinations.⁴³ In the first quarter of 2016, nearly 175,800 asylum seekers fleeing the war in Syria reached Europe via the Mediterranean, with tens of thousands stuck waiting in refugee camps (such as this one in Turkey) and thousands more dying in transit, according to the

International Organization for Migration.

Media, information, and images travel constantly throughout the world even if people cannot travel with the same ease. We see the refugee crisis of the 2010s in vivid detail through online news services, and these images generate passionate debates about global human rights, national responsibility for noncitizens, and cultural change. Understanding how images circulate and what role they play is crucial to understanding these twenty-first-century practices of looking in relationship to the rights and freedoms of people to look and to move.

In Syria more than half the country's prewar population—over 11 million people—has been killed or forced to flee. The Syrian refugee crisis that began in late 2011 with people fleeing the violence of a civil war that followed anti-government protests has produced a series of iconic images that have circulated virally through social media and mainstream media outlets. The images that emerged as iconic showed desperate refugees crowded into boats, weeping as they arrived at Greek beaches. Through their iconic status, these images transcended the specifics of this particular crisis, of people fleeing violence in Syria, and have come to represent larger issues of humanity, desperation, survival, and tragedy in a world in which borders and movement are sites of tremendous political upheaval and change. One image that produced significant debate showed a young boy, later identified as three-year-old Aylan Kurdi, lying dead on a beach in the Turkish resort town of Bodrum.⁴⁴

There is a long history of childrens' images emerging as those that are most controversial and affecting in depictions of world violence. In these contexts, children are often seen as iconic victims, emblems of a larger victimized population's innocence. The debate about this image centered on questions such as whether it

was too graphic to be shown on social media (where it could pop up next to selfies) and the ethics of retweeting an image of a dead child. These discussions spurred its further circulation and prompted further calls to action on behalf of the refugee crisis. Commentators focused on the boy's clothing and small sneakers, suggesting that he could be anyone's child. At a moment when European commentators and politicians were using xenophobic language to describe Syrian refugees as a "swarm," the image humanized those fleeing violence, driving home the fact that this could happen to anyone.

The image was remade into murals and performances as well as other works which circulated around the world, as artists including Ai Weiwei responded to the crisis in many different forms. The artist Banksy produced a miniature fleet of refugee-filled boats that could be navigated by park visitors in his dystopic theme park, Dismaland, which was open for five weeks in southwest England in August 2015. The park, which was conceived of as a dark view of the world playing off the codes of Disneyland, housed art by fifty-eight artists commenting on world crises.



FIG. 10.28

Police officer near Bodrum, Turkey, with body of Aylan Kurdi, a Syrian boy who drowned as his family attempted to get to Greece, September 2015

FIG. 10.29

Banksy, refugee boat at Dismaland Bemusement Park, Somerset, England, 2015



Here, the small, dark refugee boat plays off visitors' associations with miniature boats and amusement park games where players win prizes by using their navigating skills.

Borders foreground technology, visibility, and environmental change. For example, the border towns flanking the United States and Mexico hold increasingly intensified fences and guards, including civilian vigilante patrols. North of the border, a few miles into California, boxy condo villages have been assembled in rows by the hundreds. If we look south of the California border, we see yet another field of box-like assemblages. These are not condos but shantytowns, the often illegal settlements of impoverished factory workers and unemployed Mexicans. These shantytowns are often found close to the border where we also find *maquiladoras*, foreign-owned plants set up in special economic zones that import materials and equipment on a duty- and tariff-free basis to have goods assembled by low-paid laborers for export. There are three hundred *maquiladoras* in Mexico, most at the border where goods can conveniently cross back into the United States for consumption. In them over a million Mexican workers are employed, earning much lower wages than would be paid a few miles away in the United States.

The shantytowns epitomize the practices of appropriation, pastiche, and bricolage described throughout this book. They are constructed by the hands of those who cannot afford to rent or own a home. Some are factory workers and day laborers who cross into the United States to work illegally in jobs such as house cleaning, construction, and landscaping. Dwellings are fashioned from materials at hand: the cardboard, wood, corrugated steel, and PVC piping appropriated from the garbage left over from urban consumption and construction and from industrial deliveries and production.

The Mexico City- and San Diego-based architect Teddy Cruz engages with the visual and material politics of housing as an architect, artist, and global activist working collaboratively through his studio, Estudio Cruz + Forman, with political scientist Fonna Forman. Architecture, Cruz proposes, camouflages bad planning. The problem is not buildings, but inequality of wealth. Estudio Cruz + Forman draws from the aesthetic and formal strategies of those Tijuana slum residents who fashion their houses from the castoffs of industrial production and waste from San Diego housing construction. The structural logic of shantytown dwellers is put forward in the studio's own designs as a form of knowledge that exerts pressure upon design born of affluence and privilege. The subjects who engage in bricolage and "making do" to assemble their homes are no less modern, no less paradigmatic of the digital era, than the typical student we described at the outset of this book, the person who wakes to a mobile phone's alarm clock and spends the day negotiating digital screens. Cruz offers a "bottom-up" approach to public culture, a system he maps by making graphics and staging events in which participants follow flows of knowledge, waste, and bodies.

For example, for *The Political Equator III* (2011), titled "Conversations on Co-Existence: Border Neighborhoods as Sites of Production," Cruz invited



FIG. 10.30

Manufactured Sites: A Housing Urbanism Made of Waste, 2005, Estudio Teddy Cruz (model, mixed media)

participants to walk with him through a sewage drain recently constructed by Homeland Security under the border between an unpopulated area of San Diego border and an expanse of the Mexican city of Tijuana in which about 85,000 people live in shantytowns close to the massive border wall. This area is adjacent to a sensitive environmental zone that is also heavily militarized. In this performance of cross-border citizenship, the drain was officially designated a temporary port of entry for twenty-four hours. Its path led to a temporary tent, under which border-crossers from the United States were met by customs agents who checked documents. People from mayors' offices on both sides of the border were invited to cross. At the end of the passage, participants could see the sewer effluence that continually flows south into the otherwise protected Tijuana Estuary. The project invited immersion in a field of the gaze in which systems of environmental protection, national securitization, and informal settlement collide.

We encourage readers to see the subjects who populate the periphery and build from discarded construction materials not as the “have-nots” who should be helped through benevolent philanthropy to modernize. Rather, Cruz shows us how we can learn from the strategies of those forced to live at the margins of late modernity's development and forge exchanges of knowledge and strategies that may lead us toward emancipatory citizenship. Rather than embracing assemblage and bricolage strategies merely as models for fine art form, we should be astute cultural readers, discerning the meanings of these structures within a broader politics of life on which our art production may make an impact. As cultural producers, we should work not only within museums and universities but also in the institutions of urban and environmental design and management, housing, health care, and food production—places that make the everyday landscape a place where we can live, or not.

The desire to situate oneself within the local and the national is always in tension with an embrace of the global; the movement of cultural products and visual

images throughout the world shows how cultural meanings and values change and power is negotiated. In this book we have examined many of the changes that have taken place in the world of visual images throughout history and focused in particular on the ways that image technologies that emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have impacted the kinds of images that are produced, circulated, and consumed in and across cultures. This complex history reveals how difficult it is to predict the future of images in the twenty-first century.

Yet, at the same time, the image can never in itself encompass all that is entailed in living in the world. Whereas in the late twentieth century it was possible for Baudrillard to argue that simulation preceded experience and the real, in the twenty-first century it becomes impossible to ignore the realities of life lived in the remains of modernity. The material environment is crucial to understanding and grounding our global worldview. Building and engineering are more than just tropes of change. If we can say that visual culture was the paradigmatic form of the twentieth century, we may find that engineering and the built environment, the field in which we live in all of our sensory and motor capacities, are the paradigmatic forms of the twenty-first century.

Visual culture can shape life anew in all sorts of professions and contexts, not just in art, photography, and media production. This is apparent in Duchamp's readymades, Fred Wilson's mining of the historical museum to reframe the objects that hold a history of racism, Shepard Fairey's appropriation of Soviet revolutionary poster art to express political change, and the Guerrilla Girls' public performances and institutional critiques of women artists' exclusion from museums. Cruz's work suggests that in the twenty-first century the site of action is at the margins, in the places and spaces where art intersects with other institutions, sometimes troublingly and uncomfortably. Everyday life and the public sphere of the streets are sites not just where we may post signs and messages, but also where we may intervene in institutions, coax new visions, and shape the conditions for change.

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Abstract/abstraction In art, a nonrepresentational set of styles that respectively focus on material and formal qualities such as composition, shape, color, line, or texture rather than the overall pictorial representation of a reality external to the work of art. In advertising, the term is used to describe the fantasy world separated out from reality that is created by ads.

Abstract expressionism First used to describe expressionist art in Germany in the period after World War I, the term later became associated with American artists including Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock after World War II through the 1950s. The works of art were viewed as a record of the artist's emotional intensity and physical spontaneity and gesture during the painting process. The compositions that resulted are highly abstract, but compared to the geometric abstraction of cubist paintings, they appear less formally organized and more spontaneous.

Aesthetics A branch of philosophy that is concerned with judgments of sentiment and taste. The term can also be used to mean the philosophy of art, which considers art's meaning and value in light of standards such as beauty and truth. Post-modern theorists questioned the universalizing claims of aesthetic judgment.

Affect Feeling or emotion, and the expression of feeling or emotion through the face, body, voice, or another medium such as captioning, artwork, or writing. In affect theory, affect refers to the forces, largely unconscious, that move us toward emotion and feelings in relation to the body. Theorists of affect include Gilles Deleuze, Silvan S. Tomkins, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Lauren Berlant, and Ann Cvetkovich. See also *Psychoanalytic theory*.

Agency The capacity or power to act or to make meaning on one's own behalf relatively free of influence from social forces and the will of others. Foucault's model of power suggests that human subjects are never wholly free agents but are always shaped by and through the social institutions and historical contexts in which they live.

Algorithm The set of rules that are embedded by computer programmers into the code of a computing system to establish in advance a process the system will follow when calculating, processing, or performing automated reasoning with data that is input later. For example, Facebook is set up with a news feed algorithm that is designed to sort and rank the thousands of items that your friends post and then to deliver posts to you that match certain criteria. Algorithms are often used to shape programs in ways that users experience as customized to personal taste.

Alienation A term that has several meanings historically: in general, the sense of distance from others in one's social world, a loss of self, and a sense of helplessness that is an effect of life in modernity. In Marxism, alienation is a condition of capitalism in which humans experience a sense of separation from the products of their labor, hence from other aspects of life, including human relations. In psychoanalysis, alienation refers to split subjectivity and is a result of the fact that one is not in full conscious control of one's thoughts, actions, and desires because of the mediating forces of the unconscious. See *Ideology*, *Marxist theory*, *Modernism*, *Modernity*, *Psychoanalytic theory*.

Analog The representation of data by means of physical properties that express value along a continuous scale. Analog technologies include photography, magnetic tape, vinyl recording, a clock with hands, or a mercury thermometer, in which highs and lows, darks and lights, and so forth are marked along a scale that shows incremental change, such as that of electrical voltage. It could be said that we experience the world as analog, that is, as based on a sense of continuity. An analog image such as a photograph is distinguished from its digital counterpart in its basis on continuity in gradation of tone and color. In contrast, a digital image is divided into bits that are mathematically encoded. See *Digital*.

Anthropocene The proposed name for the current geological epoch or time period (following the Holocene) in which humans have irrevocably impacted Earth's geology and ecosystem.

Apparatus theory This concept, which draws on Louis Althusser's concept of the state apparatus and Jacques Lacan's concept of identification, was introduced by film theorists including Jean-Louis Baudry (1970) to emphasize that it is not only the film image or text that engages the spectator, but also the technology and its organization in the space of the film theater and the political economy of the industry workplace. Baudry and others emphasized such factors as the darkened room (likened to Plato's cave), the particular condition of sitting still face-forward in a group, and the position of the projector out of sight. Others, including Mary Ann Doane (1980), introduced considerations such as the envelopment of the spectators in sound within the cinematic apparatus. In the 2010s, apparatus theory has been subject to a resurgence of interest in science and technology studies, where it is used to discuss immersion in medical and scientific body imaging systems.

Appropriation The act of borrowing, stealing, or taking over others' works, images, words, or meanings to one's own ends. Cultural appropriation is the process of borrowing and changing the meaning of commodities, cultural products, slogans, images, or elements of fashion by putting them into a new context or in juxtaposition with new elements. Appropriation is one of the primary forms of oppositional production and reading, when, for instance, viewers take cultural products and reedit, rewrite, or change them, or change their meaning or use. See *Bricolage*, *Oppositional reading*, *Transcoding*.

Aura A term used by German theorist Walter Benjamin to describe a special quality that seems to emanate from unique works of art. According to Benjamin, the aura of unique works gives them the quality of authenticity, which cannot be reproduced.

Aura is not a quality the work materially holds, but one that is imputed to the work by a culture that holds uniqueness in high regard. See *Reproduction*.

Authenticity The quality of being genuine or unique. Traditionally, authenticity referred to a quality attributed to things that are one of a kind and original, rather than copied. In Walter Benjamin's theory of the reproduction of images, authenticity is precisely that special something that cannot be reproduced when an original is copied.

Avant-garde A term imported from military strategy (in which it indicated an expeditionary or scouting force that takes risks) into art history to describe movements at the forefront of artistic experimentation, leading the way toward major changes. Avant-garde is often associated with modernism and formal innovation and is frequently contrasted with mainstream or traditional art that is conventional rather than challenging in its form. See *Modernism*.

Base/superstructure Terms used by Marx to describe the relations of labor and economics (considered the social base) to the social system and consciousness (regarded as superstructure) in capitalism. In classic Marxist theory, the economic base determines the legal, political, religious, and ideological aspects of the superstructure. See *Marxist theory*.

Binary oppositions The oppositions such as nature/culture, male/female, mind/body, and so forth, through which reality has traditionally been represented. Although binary oppositions can seem immutable and mutually exclusive, contemporary theories of difference have demonstrated the ways in which these oppositional categories are interrelated and are ideologically and historically constructed. This leads to the exclusion of other positions in the spectrum between these binaries. For example, sexuality exists along a continuum and not solely in the form of two poles of identity, male and female. The historical reliance on binary oppositions demonstrates how difference is essential to meaning. See *Cartesian dualism*, *Marked/unmarked*, *Structuralism*.

Biomedical citizenship A term often used to define how in developed nations health has been increasingly linked to rights of consumption, with citizens increasingly having the capacity to shape, understand, and control their own bodies through the consumption of pharmaceutical and biomedical treatments and devices. Not only do we control the constitution of the self as citizen, self-management, self-shaping, and self-understanding are understood as a national citizenship right. See *Biopower*, *Power/knowledge*.

Biopower A term used by French philosopher Michel Foucault to describe the technologies of power through which modern states rely on institutional practices to regulate, subjugate, and control their human subjects. Biopower refers to the ways that power is enacted on a collective social body through the regulation and discipline of individual bodies in realms such as social hygiene, public health, education, demography, census taking, and reproductive practices, among others. These processes and practices produce particular kinds of knowledge about bodies and produce bodies with particular kinds of meaning and capacities. In Foucault's terms, all bodies are constructed through the many techniques of biopower. See *Biomedical citizenship*, *Docile bodies*, *Power/knowledge*.

Black-boxed The state of a machine or instrument that has been built so that the user is unable to see inside (metaphorically and sometimes literally) to discern how it functions. What gets “boxed” are the structure and mechanisms of a particular technology, making them unknowable to its users.

Brand The name, trademark, and trade dress of a company and/or product through which identity is established. Branding began in the nineteenth century when products sold in bulk were given distinctive names and packaging with unique trademark symbols. Contemporary brands have highly complex yet distinctive meanings created through advertising, logos, packaging, and even distinctive sounds. It is now common to speak of brand culture, brand identity, brand identification, and “love of the brand,” all of which demonstrate the depth of consumer relationships with brands.

Bricolage The practice of working with whatever materials are at hand, “making do” with what one has. As a cultural practice, bricolage was used by Dick Hebdige to refer to the activity of taking familiar or discarded commodities and making them one’s own by giving them new meaning, sometimes to create oppositional meanings out of familiar things. The punk practice of turning everyday, utilitarian safety pins into clothing and body ornaments is an example of bricolage. See *Appropriation*.

Broadcast media Media that are transmitted from one central point to many different receiving points. Twentieth-century television and radio, for instance, were transmitted across broad spectrums, from a central transmission point to a vast number of receivers (TV sets and radios). Low-power and local transmission are not broadcast but narrowcast media. See *Narrowcast media*.

Built environment The manmade spaces and places that include buildings, neighborhoods, roadways, gardens and parks, as well as energy infrastructures, industrial and military sites, and any other manmade structures in the landscape. One of the key aspects of the term’s use is to emphasize that design is neither simply utilitarian nor neutral, but is always driven by social factors, including wealth, taste, ideas about health relative to the environment, and values pertaining to how we do and should live.

Capitalism An economic system in which investment in and ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange of wealth are held primarily by individuals and corporations, as opposed to cooperative or state-owned means of wealth. Capitalism is based on an ideology of free trade, open markets, and individuality. In capitalism, the use value of goods (how they are used) matters less than their exchange value (what they are worth on the market). Industrial capitalism refers to capitalist systems that are based on industry, such as those of many European-American nation-states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Late capitalism (which is also called postindustrialism) refers to late twentieth-century forms of capitalism that are more global in terms of economic ownership and structure and in which the primary commodities that are traded include services and information, in addition to manufactured, physically tangible goods. Marxist theory is a critique of the ways that the system of capitalism is based on inequality and exploitation of workers, allowing owners of the means of production

to prosper while workers get by often without the opportunity to accumulate more capital and own the means of production themselves. See *Exchange value*, *Marxist theory*, *Postindustrialization*, *Use value*.

Cartesian dualism The binary division, theorized by seventeenth-century philosopher René Descartes, of mind and body, with the mind understood to contain consciousness and reason and the body understood to be material. The concept of mind–body dualism has its origins in Greek philosophy but was explicated at length by Descartes in relation to his concepts of consciousness and reason. See *Cartesian space*.

Cartesian space A term that refers to the mathematical mapping of space developed by the seventeenth-century philosopher René Descartes. Descartes's theory of space came out of a rationalist, mechanistic interpretation of nature. A Cartesian grid composes space through three axes, each intersecting each other at ninety degrees to make up three-dimensional space. Cartesian space is contingent on the idea of a rational human subject whose sensory experience is put to the test of judgment. See *Cartesian dualism*, *Virtual*.

Classical art Art that adheres to the styles and aesthetics of tradition. Typically the term is associated with ancient Greek and Roman art, referring to norms and standards that emphasize balance and symmetry in scale and proportion.

Code The implicit rules by which meanings get put into social practice and can therefore be read by their users. Codes involve a systematic organization of signs. For example, there are codes of social conduct, such as forms of greeting or styles of social interaction, that are understood within a given society. Semiotics shows that language and representational media, such as cinema and television, are structured according to specific codes. Cinematic codes are the accepted ways of using lighting, camera movement, and editing within a given genre, period, or style. Codes may cross media, and various sets of codes may inform a single medium. For example, the painterly codes of chiaroscuro lighting or Renaissance perspective may be used in photographs and films. See *Decoding*, *Encoding*, *Semiotics*, *Sign*.

Colonialism The process of a nation extending its power over another nation, people, or territory to render them a colony. The term is used primarily to describe the colonization by European countries of Africa, India, Latin and North America, and the Pacific region from the sixteenth century through the middle of the twentieth century, when decolonial struggles and wars for independence produced the conditions of postcolonialism, though many colonies still exist today. Colonization was motivated by the potential exploitation of one nation's resources and labor by another and involved both the conquest of countries politically and economically and the restructuring of the culture of the colonized, with enforced changes in language and values, among other things. See *Imperialism*, *Postcolonialism*.

Commodity/commodification Originally a term in Marxism, commodification is the process by which material objects are turned into marketable goods with monetary (exchange) value. Commodities are goods marketed to consumers in a commodity culture. See *Commodity fetishism*, *Marxist theory*.

Commodity fetishism The process through which commodities are emptied of the meaning of their production (the labor that produced them and the context in which they were produced) and filled instead with abstract meaning (usually through advertising). In Marxism, commodity fetishism is the process of mystification that exists in capitalism between what things are and how they appear or what they mean to their users. In commodity fetishism, exchange value supersedes use value so that things are valued not for what they do but for what they cost, how they look, and what connotations can be attached to them. For instance, a commodity (such as bottled purified water) is emptied of the meaning of its production (where it was bottled, who worked to bottle it, how it was shipped) and filled with new meaning (mountain springs, purity) through advertising campaigns. See *Exchange value*, *Fetish*, *Marxist theory*, *Use value*.

Conceptual art A style of art that emerged in the 1960s that focused on the idea of concept over aesthetic qualities or the material object itself. An attempt to counter the increased commercialism of the art world, conceptual art presented ideas rather than artworks that could be bought and sold and thus worked to shift the focus to the creative process and away from the art market and its commodities. Artists who worked in conceptual art include Joseph Kosuth, Hans Haacke, and Yoko Ono.

Connoisseur A person who is particularly skilled at discerning quality. The term *connoisseur* is a class-based concept that has been traditionally used to refer to those with “discriminating” taste, that is, those of an upper-class status. The concept of connoisseurship has been criticized for representing upper-class taste as something that is natural, more authentic, more educated, and more discerning than popular taste. See *Taste*.

Connotative meaning In semiotics, the social, cultural, and historical meanings that are added to a sign’s literal meaning. Connotative meanings rely on the cultural and historical context of the image and its viewers’ lived, felt knowledge of those circumstances. Connotation brings to an object or image the wider realm of ideology, cultural meaning, and value systems of a society. Peace is a connotative meaning of the image of a dove, a meaning that is socially and culturally specific, not natural. See *Denotative meaning*, *Myth*, *Semiotics*, *Sign*.

Constructivism An art movement in the Soviet Union following the 1917 Russian Revolution that deployed a modernist avant-garde aesthetic. Constructivism emphasized dynamic form and line as the embodiment of the politics and ideology of a machine-driven culture. The pro-Soviet artists of constructivism embraced the theories of Vladimir Lenin, ideas of technological progress, and a machine aesthetic. Its primary proponents were Vladimir Tatlin, El Lissitzky, and filmmaker Dziga Vertov. Soviet leader Joseph Stalin outlawed constructivism and embraced pictorial realism as the art form of the masses after 1932.

Convergence A term used to refer to the combination of media together into one point of access or one conglomerate form. The combination of formerly different technologies such as telephone, email, camera, and musical listening system into one device (a “smart” phone) is an example of media convergence.

Cosmopolitanism The condition of being a citizen of the world and having an identity that is more broadly defined than in a single provincial or national context.

Cosmopolitanism has a long history as a term and is used today most often in relation to theories of globalization. See *Globalization*.

Counterhegemony The forces in a given society that work against dominant meaning and power systems and keep those dominant meanings in constant tension and flux. See *Hegemony*.

Cubism An early twentieth-century art movement beginning in 1907 that was part of the modern French avant-garde. Cubism began with a collaboration between Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, who were both developing new ways of depicting space and objects. Cubism was a deliberate critique of the dominance of perspective in styles of art and an attempt to represent the dynamism and complexity of human vision by representing objects simultaneously from multiple perspectives. See *Dada*, *Futurism*, *Modernism*.

Cultural imperialism See *Imperialism*.

Culture industry A term used by the members of the Frankfurt School, in particular Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, to indicate how capitalism during the mid-twentieth century organized and homogenized cultures, giving consumers less freedom to choose media according to their own tastes and construct their own meanings. Horkheimer and Adorno saw the culture industry as generating mass culture as a form of commodity fetishism that functioned as propaganda for industrial capitalism. They saw all mass culture as dictated by formula and repetition, encouraging conformity, promoting passivity, cheating its consumers of what media messages promise, and promoting pseudoindividuality. See *Frankfurt School*, *Pseudoindividuality*.

Cyborg A term originally proposed by Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline in 1960 to describe “self-regulating man-machine systems” or cybernetic organisms. Since that time, the cyborg has been theorized, most famously by Donna Haraway, as a means to consider the relationship of human subjects to technology and the subjectivity of late capitalism, biomedicine, and computer technology. It is argued that those who have prosthetics or pacemakers, for instance, are cyborgs, and cyborgs have populated contemporary science fiction literature and film. Contemporary thinking about cyborgs emphasizes how all subjects of contemporary post-modern and technological societies can be understood as cyborgs because we all depend on and have an integral relationship with technologies in everyday ways.

Dada An intellectual movement that began in Zurich in 1916 and later flourished in France through the work and ideas of figures such as Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia. Dada was defined by the poet Tristan Tzara as a state of mind, and was primarily anti-art in its sensibilities, with, for instance, Duchamp making “readymades” by putting ordinary objects such as a bicycle wheel and a urinal on display as fine art. Dada was irreverent concerning taste and tradition. It was influenced by futurism, though it did not fully share futurism’s association with fascism and love of the machine. Other important Dada figures are the German writer Richard Hulsenbeck, the German artist Kurt Schwitters, and the French artist Jean Arp. See *Futurism*, *Modernism*.

Decoding In cultural consumption, the process of interpreting and giving meaning to cultural products in conformity with shared cultural codes. Used by Stuart Hall to

describe the work done by cultural consumers when they view and interpret cultural products (such as television shows, films, ads, etc.) that have been encoded by producers. According to Hall, factors such as “frameworks of knowledge” (class status, cultural knowledge), “relations of production” (which include the viewing context in which meaning is produced), and “technical infrastructure” (the technological medium in which one is viewing) influence the process of decoding. See *Code, Encoding*.

Denotative meaning In semiotics, the literal, face-value meaning of a sign. The denotative meaning of a picture of a rose is a flower. However, in any given context, a rose image is likely to have connotative meanings (such as romanticism, love, or loyalty) that add social, historical, and cultural (connotative) meaning to its denotative meaning. See *Connotative meaning, Semiotics, Sign*.

Dialectic A term from philosophy whose use is varied and often ambiguous. In Greek philosophy, it referred to the dialogic process of question and answer as the means to higher knowledge. The term has generally been used to refer to a conflict or tension between two positions, for example, the dialectics of good and evil. However, its use in philosophy (the Hegelian dialectic) refers to this conflict as a dynamic that produces social relations and meaning as they are enacted and resolved. In Marxist theory, history moves forward not in a continuous progression but through a chain of conflicts that are resolved only to bring new conflicts. Marxism speaks in this respect of theses and antitheses, for example, an owner (thesis) and a worker (antithesis), whose antagonism leads to a synthesis through dialectical process. See *Marxist theory*.

Diaspora The existence of various communities, usually of a particular ethnicity, culture, or nation, scattered across different places outside of their land of origin or homeland. Work in diaspora studies has stressed the complexity of such communities, who not only negotiate memory and nostalgia for original homelands but also share experiences and histories of migration, displacement, and hybrid identity. See *Hybridity*.

Digital Representing data by means of discrete digits and encoding that data mathematically. Digital technologies, which contrast with analog technologies, involve a process of encoding information in bits and assigning each a mathematical value. A clock with hands that move around a dial to show the time is analog, and a clock with a numbered readout is digital. A photographic image is analogic and continuous in tone, whereas a digital image is mathematically encoded so that each bit has a particular value and tone is represented in pixels. This allows the digital image to be more easily manipulated and copied without degeneration. See *Analog, Pixel*.

Discontinuity In avant-garde and postmodern styles, the strategy of breaking up a continuous narrative, interrupting stylistic flow with unexpected or contrasting elements, and circumventing audience identification in order to defy viewer expectations of smoothness and flow. Discontinuity might include jump cuts, a shuffling of chronological events, and reflexivity. See *Reflexivity*.

Discourse In general, the socially organized process of talking about a particular subject matter. More specifically, according to Michel Foucault, discourse is a body

of knowledge that both defines and limits what can be said about something. Although there is no set list of discourses, the term tends to be used for broad bodies of social knowledge, such as the discourses of economics, the law, medicine, politics, sexuality, technology, and so forth. Discourses are specific to particular social and historical contexts, and they change over time. It is fundamental to Foucault's theory that discourses produce certain kinds of subjects and knowledge and that we occupy to varying degrees the subject positions defined within a broad array of discourses. See *Episteme*, *Subject position*.

Distribution of the sensible A term from Jacques Rancière that refers to the way in which power relations, enacted through sense perception, designate that which is visible (and heard/understood) and that which cannot be seen (or heard). Politics thus creates a distribution or division (a "partage") not between those with power and those without, but between that which can be seen/understood and that which can't, what is rendered noise. For Rancière artistic practices intervene into and challenge the distribution of the sensible.

Docile bodies A term used by Michel Foucault to describe the process by which people submit to bodily social norms and comply with disciplinary rituals. See *Biopower*.

Dominant-hegemonic reading In Stuart Hall's formulation of three potential positions for the viewer-consumer of mass culture, the dominant-hegemonic reading is one in which consumers unquestioningly accept the message that the producers are transmitting to them. According to Hall, few viewers actually occupy this position at any time because mass culture cannot satisfy all viewers' culturally specific experiences, memories, and desires and because viewers are not passive recipients of the messages of mass media and popular culture. See *Negotiated reading*, *Oppositional reading*.

Empiricism A method of scientific practice emphasizing the importance of sensory experience, observation, and measurement in the production of knowledge. An empirical methodology relies on observation, experimentation, and data collection to establish particular truths about things in the world.

Encoding In cultural consumption, the production of meaning in cultural products. Used by Stuart Hall to describe the work done by cultural producers in encoding cultural products (television shows, films, ads, etc.) with preferred meaning that will then be decoded by viewers. According to Hall, factors such as "frameworks of knowledge" (class status, cultural knowledge, and taste of the producers), "relations of production" (labor contexts of the production), and "technical infrastructure" (the technological context of the production) influence this process of encoding. See *Decoding*.

Enlightenment An eighteenth-century cultural movement associated with a rejection of religious and prescientific tradition through an embrace of the concept of reason. Enlightenment thinkers emphasized rationality and the idea of moral and social betterment through scientific progress. Kant defined the Enlightenment as "man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity" and awarded it the motto of *sapere aude*—Dare to Know. The Enlightenment is associated with broader social changes, such as the decline of feudalism and the power of the

Church, the increased impact of printing in European culture, and the rise of the middle class in Europe. It is considered to be an important aspect of the rise of modernity. See *Modernity*.

Episteme The ideas and ways of ordering knowledge that are taken as true and accurate in a given era. The term was used by Michel Foucault, in his book *The Order of Things*, to describe the dominant mode of organizing knowledge in a given period of history, the ground on which particular discourses can emerge in that time. Each period of history has a different episteme. See *Discourse, Epistemology*.

Epistemology The branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge and what can be known. To ask an epistemological question about something is to investigate what we can know about it and how we know it.

Exchange value The monetary value assigned to a commodity in a consumer culture. When an object is seen in terms of its exchange value, its economic worth (or monetary equivalent) is more important than what it can be used for (its use value). Marxist theory critiques the emphasis in capitalism on exchange over use value. For example, gold has significant exchange value though very little use value, as there are few practical functions for it. It serves to buy status. See *Capitalism, Commodity/commodification, Commodity fetishism, Marxist theory, Use value*.

False consciousness In Marxist theory, the process by which the real economic imbalances of the dominant social system are hidden by ideology and ordinary citizens come to believe in the perfection of the system that in fact oppresses them. Twentieth-century developments in Marxism see the concept of false consciousness as itself potentially oppressive because it characterizes the masses as unaware dupes of the system. In contrast, concepts such as hegemony emphasize the active struggle people engage in over meanings rather than their passive acceptance of ideological systems. See *Hegemony, Ideology, Marxist theory*.

Fetish In anthropology, a fetish is an object that is endowed with magical powers and ritualistic meaning, for example, a totem pole. In Marxist theory, it is an object that is awarded “magical” economic power that is not in the object itself. For example, a dollar bill is a piece of paper that physically has no worth, yet it is given economic power by the state. In psychoanalytic theory, a fetish is an object that is endowed with magical powers to enable a person to compensate for a psychological lack. For example, a poster of a movie star may offer viewers a fantasy of possession or closeness with the absent star. Shoes, or even feet, may be psychically invested with the power to incite sexual desire for the sorts of bodies that have such feet, or that wear such shoes. The sexual response is displaced onto a part, an object, or a category of object, which takes on charged meaning in the absence of the body desired. See *Commodity fetishism*.

Flâneur A French term popularized by nineteenth-century poet Charles Baudelaire, subsequently theorized explicitly by cultural critics such as Walter Benjamin, that refers to a person who wanders city streets, taking in the sights, especially the modern spaces of consumption and display (such as arcades and department store windows). The *flâneur* is a kind of window shopper, with the implication that the act of looking at the gleaming offerings of commodity culture is itself a source

of pleasure whether or not one actually ever purchases anything. Originally, the *flâneur* was understood to be male, as women did not have the same freedom to wander the city streets alone. Authors including Anne Friedberg theorize the *flâneuse*, the female shopper who consumes the seductive sights of the city. See *Modernism, Modernity*.

Frankfurt School A group of scholars and social theorists, working first in Germany in the 1930s and then primarily in the United States, who were interested in applying Marxist theory to the new forms of cultural production and social life in twentieth-century capitalist societies. The Frankfurt School scholars rejected Enlightenment philosophy, stating that reason did not free people but rather became a force in the rise of technical expertise, the expression of instrumental thinking divorced from wider goals of human emancipation, and the exploitation of people, making systems of social domination more efficient and effective. The key figures associated with the Frankfurt School are Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and later Jürgen Habermas. The early members fled Germany in the 1930s with the rise to power of the Nazis, and many of them came to the United States. See *Culture industry, Pseudoindividuality*.

Futurism An Italian avant-garde movement inspired by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's *Futurist Manifesto*, published in 1909. The futurists were interesting in breaking free of tradition and embraced the idea of speed and the future. They wrote many manifestos and maintained a provocative and challenging style. Some of the futurist painters, such as Giacomo Balla, focused on painting objects and people in motion, and others worked in cubist styles. Marinetti famously forged links between futurism and Italian fascism, but futurists could be found all along the political spectrum. See *Cubism, Dada*.

Gaze In theories of the visual arts, such as film theory and art history, the gaze is a term used to describe the relationship of looking in which the subject is caught up in dynamics of desire through trajectories of looking and being looked at among objects and other people. Gaze theory was central to the theories of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan in his approach to how individuals enact desire. Applying Freud's and Lacan's theories to film, 1970s psychoanalytic film theorists posited that in cinema, the gaze of the spectator on the image was an implicitly male one that objectified the women on screen. Since the 1990s, theories of the gaze have complicated this original model and have introduced discussion of a variety of different kinds of gazes, for example, gazes distinguished by sex, gender, race, and class.

Michel Foucault uses the term *gaze* to describe the relationship of subjects within a network of power—and the mechanism of vision as a means of negotiating and conveying power within that network—in a given institutional context. For Foucault, social institutions produce an inspecting, normalizing, or clinical gaze in which their subjects are caught and through which institutions keep track of their activities and thereby control and discipline them. See *Mirror phase, Panopticism, Psychoanalytic theory*.

Gender-bending Practices that call into question the traditional gender categories of male and female and heterosexual norms of representation and interpretation.

For example, a gender-bending reading of a text might point out previously unacknowledged gay or lesbian meanings that may not have been intended by producers, but which nonetheless are plausible in an alternative reading of the codes.

Genre The classification of cultural products according to familiar, highly legible formulas. Genres follow recognizable formulas, codes, and conventions. In cinema, genres include the Western, the romantic comedy, science fiction, and the action-adventure. In television, genres include situation comedies, soap operas, news magazines, talk shows, reality TV, and home improvement shows. Contemporary genre products are often parodies of the genre category itself.

Globalization A term used increasingly toward the end of the twentieth century to describe a set of conditions that have escalated since the postwar period. These conditions include increased rates of migration, the rise of multinational corporations and global financial systems, international trade liberalization initiatives, the development of global communications and transportation systems, increased postindustrialization, the decline of the sovereign nation-state, and the “shrinking” of the world through commerce and communication. The term *globalization* also extends the concept of the local in that globalization’s advancement depends on the formation of new sorts of local communities (such as those on the Internet) that are not bound by geography. See *Cosmopolitanism*.

Global village A term coined by Marshall McLuhan in the 1960s to refer to the ways that electronic media can connect people from all over the world into geographically dispersed communities, giving the collective sense of a village to people that are separated geographically. This concept puts a positive spin on globalization that emphasizes the connections created by people over distances through communication technologies. See *Globalization*.

Graphical user interface (GUI) The interface of computer software systems used on personal computers and on the Internet that allows users to make choices, enact commands, and move around screen space through the use of graphics and images rather than text. See *Internet*, *Web*.

Habitus A term popularized by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to describe the unconscious dispositions and class position embodied in the individual and expressed through tastes and preferences in cultural consumption. Taste in music, décor, art, fashion, and so forth are aspects of one’s cultural capital, which is a position assumed not through wealth or class status, per se, but through enculturation (for example, an individual who is lower class can embody a habitus that reflects “upper-class” taste through education, job experience, or studying on their own).

Hegemony A concept most associated with Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci, who rethought how power works in traditional Marxist theories of ideology. He shifted his thinking away from ideas about false consciousness and passive social subjects and toward human subjects as active agents. There are two central aspects of Gramsci’s definition of hegemony: that dominant ideologies are often offered as common sense and that dominant ideologies are in tension with other forces and hence constantly in flux. The term *hegemony* thus indicates how ideological meaning is an object of struggle rather than an oppressive force that fully dominates subjects from above. See *Counterhegemony*, *Ideology*, *Marxist theory*.

High/low culture Terms that have traditionally been used to make distinctions about different kinds of culture. High culture distinguishes culture that only an elite can appreciate, such as classical art, music, and literature, as opposed to commercially produced mass culture presumed to be accessible to lower classes. The distinction of high and low culture has been heavily criticized by theorists since the 1980s for its elitism and its condescending view of the popular consumer as a passive viewer with no taste.

Hybridity A term referring to anything of mixed origins that has been used in contemporary theory to describe those people whose identities are derived simultaneously from many cultural origins, ethnicities, or sexualities. Hybridity is used to describe diasporic cultures that are neither in one place nor the other but of many places. See *Diaspora*.

Hyperreal A term coined by French theorist Jean Baudrillard that refers to a world in which codes of reality are used to simulate reality in cases in which no referent exists in the real world. Hyperreality is thus a simulation of reality in which various elements function to emphasize their “realness.” In postmodern style, hyperrealism can also refer to the use of naturalistic effects (“natural” sound, jerky “amateur” camerawork, or unrehearsed nonactors) to signify the “real.” See *Postmodernism/postmodernity*, *Simulation/simulacrum*.

Hypertext A format for presenting text and images, which forms the basis of the web, that allows viewers to move from one text, page, or website to another through hyperlinks. This means that any website, for instance, can have a number of links to other sites, to audio, video, and other graphics. The importance of this format is that it allows web users to move laterally through a significant amount of material that is linked. See *Internet*, *Web*.

Icon Originally, the term *icon* referred to a religious image that had sacred value. In its contemporary meaning, an icon is an image (or person) that refers to something beyond its individual components, something (or someone) that acquires symbolic significance. Icons are often perceived to represent universal concepts, emotions, and meanings. See *Iconic sign*.

Iconic sign A term in semiotics used by Charles Peirce to indicate those signs in which there is a resemblance between the signifier (word/image) and the thing signified. For example, a drawing of a person is an iconic sign because it resembles him or her. Peirce distinguished between iconic, indexical, and symbolic signs. See *Indexical sign*, *Semiotics*, *Sign*, *Symbolic sign*.

Identification The psychological process whereby one forms a bond with or emulates an aspect or attribute of another person and is transformed through that process. The term *identification* is used extensively to describe the experiences of viewers in looking at film. According to cinema theorist Christian Metz, cinematic identification can involve feeling oneself to be in the position of characters or the cinematic apparatus itself. One example would be to feel as if one were seeing in the place of the camera that appears to go everywhere in a scene. Viewers identify in complex ways that do not always map onto their actual social identities. For example, women may identify with male characters, straight men may identify with gay male characters, and so on.

Ideology The shared set of values and beliefs that exist within a given society and through which individuals live out their relations to social institutions and structures. Ideology refers to the way that certain concepts and values are made to seem like natural, inevitable aspects of everyday life. In Marxist theory, the term *ideology* has undergone several changes in definition: first, by Marx, to imply a social system in which the masses are instilled with the dominant ideology of the ruling class and that constitutes a kind of false consciousness; second, by French Marxist Louis Althusser, who combined psychoanalysis and Marxist theory to postulate that we are unconsciously constituted as subjects by ideology, which gives us a sense of our place in the world; third, by Antonio Gramsci, who used the term *hegemony* to describe how dominant ideologies are always in flux and under contestation from other ideas and values. See *False consciousness*, *Hegemony*, *Interpellation*, *Marxist theory*.

Imperialism Derived from the word *empire*, imperialism refers to the practices of nations that aim to extend their boundaries into new territories, dominating them through processes such as colonization. In Marxist theory, imperialism is one of the means through which capitalism extends its power by creating both new markets to which it can sell its commodities and new labor forces that it can exploit to make those commodities at low cost. Cultural imperialism refers to how ways of life are exported into other territories through cultural products and popular culture. The United States is understood to routinely engage in cultural imperialism. See *Colonialism*.

Impressionism An artistic style that emerged in the late nineteenth century, primarily in France, characterized by an emphasis on light and color. Impressionist work emphasized a view of nature as unstable and changeable. Painters foregrounded the brushstroke and sometimes painted the same scene many times to evoke how it changed with the light. Prominent impressionist artists included Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Alfred Sisley, Camille Pissarro, and Berthe Morisot. Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, and Paul Cezanne are often referred to as post-Impressionists.

Indexical sign A term in semiotics used by Charles Peirce to indicate those signs in which there is a physical causal connection between the signifier (word/image) and the thing signified, because both existed at some point within the same physical space. For example, smoke coming from a building is an index of a fire in that building. Similarly, an analog photograph is an index of its subject because it was taken in its presence. Peirce distinguished between iconic, indexical, and symbolic signs. See *Iconic sign*, *Semiotics*, *Sign*, *Symbolic sign*.

Internet The infrastructure that connects millions of computers together, allowing them to share information, communicate via systems such as email, and use the information-sharing model that is “the web.” Languages called “protocols” support the flow of information within and among different networks. See *Web*, *Social Network*.

Interpellation A term coined by Marxist theorist Louis Althusser to describe the process by which ideological systems call out to or “hail” social subjects and tell them their place in the system. In popular culture, interpellation refers to the

ways that cultural products address their consumers and recruit them into a particular ideological position. Images can be said to designate the kind of viewer they intend us to be, and in speaking to us as that kind of viewer, they help to shape us as particular ideological subjects. See *Ideology, Marxist theory*.

Interpretant A term used by semiotician Charles Peirce in his three-part system of signification to name the thought or mental effect produced by the relationship between the object and its representation (Peirce's definition of a sign). The interpretant is the equivalent of the signified in Saussure. Peirce stated that the interpretant could be endlessly commuted; that is, each interpretant can create a new sign, which in turn creates a new interpretant, and so on. See *Referent, Semiotics, Sign, Signified*.

Intertextuality The referencing of one text within another. In popular culture, intertextuality refers to the incorporation of meanings of one text within another in a reflexive fashion. For example, the television show *The Simpsons* includes references to films, other television shows, and celebrities, all of which bring additional meanings to the text. These intertextual references assume that the viewer knows the people and cultural products being referenced.

Irony The deliberate contradiction between the literal meaning of something and its intended meaning (which can be the opposite of the literal meaning). Irony can be seen as a context in which appearance and reality are in conflict, for instance, when someone says "beautiful weather!" to emphasize that the weather is terrible. Irony is a key feature of contemporary postmodern style, in which meanings are signaled in quotes to signify knowingness.

Kitsch Art or literature judged to have little or no aesthetic value, yet that has value precisely because of its status in evoking the class standards of bad taste or simple sentimentalism. Aficionados of kitsch thus recode kitsch objects, such as lava lamps and tacky 1950s suburban furniture, as good rather than bad taste. Kitsch can also refer to cultural objects and images that interpellate viewers in easy codes of sentimentalism, sometimes for political propaganda.

Lack A term used in psychoanalysis by Jacques Lacan to describe an essential aspect of the human psyche. According to Lacan, the human subject is defined by lack from the moment of birth and his or her separation from the mother. The subject is lacking because it believes itself to be a fragment of something larger and more primordial. The second stage of lack is the acquisition of language. In Lacan's theory, desire, the human sense of always wanting something that is out of reach or unattainable, is the result of lack. Though we always seek pleasure through others, there is no person or thing that can truly satisfy that feeling of lack. In Freudian psychoanalysis, the term *lack* refers to the woman's lack of a penis/phallus, her lack being precisely what awards power to the phallus. See *Psychoanalytic theory*.

Low culture See *High/low culture*.

Marked/unmarked In binary oppositions, the first category is understood to be unmarked (hence the "norm") and the second category as marked, hence "other." In the opposition male/female, for instance, the category male is unmarked, thus dominant (think of the universal use of the pronoun *he*), and the category of

female is marked, or not the norm. Whiteness typically goes unmarked (we rarely see an author described as white because whiteness is regarded as the default category), but blackness is typically marked (stated as such, understood to mean different from . . .). These categories of marked and unmarked are most noticeable when texts break with the norm. See *Binary oppositions*, *Other*.

Marxist theory Originating with the nineteenth-century theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marxist theory combines political economy and social critique. Marxism is, on the one hand, a general theory of human history, in which the role of the economic and modes of production are the primary determining factors of history, and, on the other hand, a particular theory of the development, reproduction, and transformation of capitalism that identifies workers as the potential agents of history. Emphasizing the profound inequities that are necessary for capitalism to function, Marxist theory is used to understand the mechanisms of capitalism and the class relations within it. Concepts of Marxism have evolved throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with such theorists as Vladimir Lenin, Jean-Paul Sartre, Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci, Chantal Mouffe, and Ernesto Laclau. See *Alienation*, *Base/superstructure*, *Commodity fetishism*, *Exchange value*, *False consciousness*, *Fetish*, *Hegemony*, *Ideology*, *Interpellation*, *Means of production*, *Pseudoindividuality*, *Reification*, *Use value*.

Mass culture/mass society Terms used historically to refer to the culture and society of the general population, often with negative connotation. Mass society was used to characterize the changes that took place in Europe and the United States throughout the industrialization of the nineteenth century and culminated after World War II, when large numbers of people were concentrated in urban centers. The term implies that these populations were subject to centralized forms of national and international media and that they received the majority of their opinions and information not locally or within their families but from a larger broadcast medium through which mass views were promulgated and reproduced. The culture of this society has been characterized as a mass culture, and this term is often synonymous with popular culture. It implies that this culture is for ordinary people who are subjected to and buy the same messages; hence, this culture is conformist and homogeneous. Both terms have been criticized for reducing specific cultures to an undifferentiated group.

Mass media Those media that are designed to reach mass audiences and that work in unison to generate specific dominant or popular representations of events, peoples, and places. The primary mass media are radio, television, the cinema, and the press, including newspapers and magazines. The term has been seen as less applicable to contemporary forms of computer-mediated communication, such as the Internet, the web, and multimedia, as they do not involve mass audiences in the same way. See *Medium/media*.

Master narrative A framework (also referred to as a metanarrative) that aims to comprehensively explain all aspects of a society or world. Examples of master narratives include religion, science, Marxism, psychoanalysis, and other theories that intend to explain all facets of life. French theorist Jean-François Lyotard famously characterized postmodern theory as profoundly skeptical of these metanarratives, their universalism, and the premise that they could explain the human condition.

Means of production In Marxist theory, the means of production are the machines, tools, plants, equipment, infrastructure, and bodies through which humans transform natural materials into goods, services, and information for the market. In a small-scale agricultural society, the agricultural means of production include individual farmers growing their own produce and constructing their own tools. In industrial capitalism, the means of production include large-scale mass production of goods in factories. In late capitalism, the means of production include the production of information and media products and services. In Marxist theory, those who own the means of production are also in control of the ideas that circulate in a society's media industries. See *Capitalism, Marxist theory*.

Medium/media A form in which artistic or cultural products are made or a form through which messages pass. In art, a medium refers to the art materials used to create a work, such as paint or stone. In communication, medium refers to a means of mediation or communication—an intermediary form through which messages are transmitted. The term *medium* also refers to the specific technologies through which messages are transmitted: radio, television, film, and so forth. The term *media* is the plural of medium but is often used in the singular, as in “the media” to describe the constellation of media industries that together influence public opinion.

Medium is the message A phrase popularized by Marshall McLuhan to refer to the ways that media forms hold meanings apart from their messages. McLuhan stated that a medium affects content because it is an extension of our individual bodies. One cannot understand and evaluate a message unless one first takes account of the medium through which one receives it. Hence McLuhan felt that a medium such as television has the power to impose “its structural character and assumptions upon all levels of our private and social lives.”

Metacommunication A discussion or exchange in which the topic is the exchange itself. A “meta” level is a reflexive level of communicating. In popular culture, this refers to texts in which the topic is the viewer's act of viewing the text. An ad that addresses a viewer about the ways that the viewer is looking at the ad is engaging in metacommunication.

Mimesis A concept that originates with the Greeks that defines representation as a process of mirroring or imitating the real. Contemporary theories such as social construction criticize mimesis for not taking into account the way in which systems of representation, such as language and images, shape how we interpret and understand what we see, rather than merely reflecting it back to us. See *Social construction*.

Mirror phase A stage of development, according to psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan, in which the infant first experiences a sense of alienation in its realization of its separateness from other human beings. According to Lacan, infants build their egos between six and eighteen months through the process of looking at a mirror body image, which may be their own mirror images, their mothers, or other figures and not necessarily a literal mirror image of their own bodies. They recognize the mirror image to be both themselves and different, yet as more whole and powerful. This split recognition forms the basis of their alienation at the same time that it pushes them to grow. The mirror phase is a useful

framework through which to understand the emotion and power invested by viewers in images as a kind of ideal form and has been used to theorize about film images in particular. See *Alienation*, *Psychoanalytic theory*.

Modernism In literature, architecture, art, and film, modernism refers to a set of styles that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that question traditions and conventions of representation (such as pictorialism, decoration and the concealment of form, narrative structure, and illusionism) in writing, architecture, and the arts. Modernists emphasized and exposed the materiality of form, the conditions of production (equipment, structural elements) so often covered over in works of culture, and the role of the author or artist as producer embedded in the material conditions of the economic and physical world. Most modernist movements shared the general principles of breaking with past conventions of narrative and pictorial realism, foregrounding form over content, and drawing attention to structure and function. Postmodernists and poststructuralists questioned this assumption that we can know the world by ascertaining its systems and structures. See *Modernity*, *Postmodernism/postmodernity*, *Structuralism*.

Modernity Modernity refers to the time period and worldview beginning approximately in the eighteenth century with the Enlightenment, and reaching its height in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when broad populations in Europe and North America were increasingly concentrated in urban centers and in industrial societies of increased mechanization and automation. Modernity was a time of colonialism as well as dramatic technological changes. A linear view of progress toward humankind's prosperity and an optimistic view of the future dominated. At the same time, modernity embodied an anxiety about change and social upheaval. See *Modernism*.

Montage Editing techniques, usually in film, that combine images in a sequence in order to condense information, space, or time. In classic Hollywood film, montage sequences were often done by special editors and indicated a rapid passage of time. In Soviet montage, the combination of images usually indicated clash or tension through the juxtaposition of different elements or scenes.

Morphing A computer imaging process by which one image is superimposed onto another, creating a third image that is a combination or blend of the two.

Myth A term used by French theorist Roland Barthes to refer to the ideological meaning of a sign that is expressed through connotation. According to Barthes, myth is the hidden set of rules, codes, and conventions through which meanings, which are in reality specific to certain groups, are rendered universal and given for a whole society. Myth allows the connotative meaning of a particular thing or image to appear to be denotative, hence literal or natural. In Barthes's famous example, an image in a popular magazine of a black soldier saluting the French flag produces the message that France is a great empire in which all young men regardless of their color faithfully serve under its flag. For Barthes, this image affirms the allegiance of French colonial subjects at the level of myth, erasing evidence of resistance. Myths are a subset of *ideology*. See *Connotative meaning*, *Ideology*, *Semiotics*, *Sign*.

Narrowcast media A term introduced in the 1980s to describe the dissemination of television programming in the cable era. Cable television is a primary example of narrowcast programming. Whereas broadcast television offered relatively few networks and the same limited number of programs to large numbers of people, cable offered more choice in the form of many channels and many programs. Narrowcasting, in the pay model offered by cable, made it profitable to offer an array of programming appealing to different communities or to broadly dispersed audiences with specific interests (such as independent film). See *Broadcast media*.

Negotiated reading Stuart Hall describes three potential positions for the reader or viewer/consumer of mass culture. Negotiated reading is one in which consumers accept some aspects of the dominant reading and reject others. According to Hall, most readings are negotiated ones, in which viewers actively struggle with dominant meanings and modify them in numerous ways because of their own social status, beliefs, and values. See *Dominant-hegemonic reading*, *Oppositional reading*.

Neoliberalism The belief that market exchange and economic liberalism should be the ethical guides of human behavior. Neoliberalism is the key value system of global capitalism. It has spread since the 1970s, as national governments have privatized and the deregulation of the media and business has been rampant throughout North America and Europe.

Noeme In photography, the quality of the image to indicate a “that has been” status, which means that the power of the image comes from the fact that it existed in co-presence with the camera. *Noeme* is a term originally derived from phenomenology. See *Phenomenology*.

Objective/objectivity The state of being unbiased and based on facts, usually referring to scientific, rational ways of understanding the world that involve a mechanical process of measurement and judgment rather than empirical human sense perceptions alone. Debates about the inherent objectivity of photographs, for instance, have centered on whether a photographic image is objective because it was taken mechanically by a camera or is subjective because it was framed and shot by a human subject. See *Subjective*.

Oppositional reading In Stuart Hall's formulation of three potential positions for the viewer/consumer of mass culture, the oppositional reading is one in which consumers fully reject the dominant meaning of a cultural product or text. This can take the form not only of disagreeing with a message but also of deliberately ignoring or even appropriating and changing the meaning of a work. See *Dominant-hegemonic reading*, *Negotiated reading*.

Orientalism A term put forward by cultural theorist Edward Said that refers to the ways that Western cultures conceive of Eastern and Middle Eastern cultures as other and attribute to these cultures qualities such as exoticism and barbarism. Orientalism sees a binary opposition between the West (the Occident) and the East (the Orient) in which either negative or romanticized qualities are attributed to the latter. For Said, Orientalism is a practice found in cultural representations, education, social science, and political policy. For instance, the stereotype of Arab people as fanatic terrorists is an example of Orientalism. See *Binary oppositions*, *Other*.

Other, the A term used to refer to the category of subjectivity that is set up in binary opposition to the dominant subject category in a culture. The Other refers to that which is understood as the symbolic opposite to the normative category. The slave is other to the master, the woman other to the man, the black person other to the white person, and so forth. The category of person marked as other is disempowered through this opposition. The concept of the Other has been taken up by various theorists, including Edward Said, in his book *Orientalism*, to describe the psychological dynamic of power that allows those who occupy a position of Western dominance to imagine a racial or ethnic Other, against whom he or she may more clearly elaborate his or her own (Western) self. The function of the Other, in Western thinking, is to serve as a foil against which the dominant subject may better know and understand himself as the center of knowledge and experience. In Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, we have another interpretation of the Other. The mother is the original mirror-like Other through whom the child begins to understand him- or herself as an autonomous individual, even prior to the child's actual physical ability to be autonomous. The Other is the figure through whom the child, between the ages of nine and sixteen months, misrecognizes itself as a unified and autonomous individual. See *Binary oppositions*, *Marked/unmarked*, *Orientalism*, *Psychoanalysis*.

Overdetermination A term that in its usage in Marxist theory (most associated with French theorist Louis Althusser) indicates a case in which several different factors work together to make the meaning of a social situation undergo a substantive change or shift. For example, the popularity of the *Mona Lisa* is overdetermined both by artistic qualities within the painting and by mythologies surrounding the woman in the painting, as well as its meaning as one of the most famous paintings in the world. See *Marxist theory*.

Panopticism A concept used by French philosopher Michel Foucault to characterize the ways that modern social subjects regulate their own behavior, borrowing from nineteenth-century philosopher Jeremy Bentham's design for a panoptic prison in which all prisoners are visible from the guard tower with blacked-out windows. The prisoner cannot know whether the tower is manned or unmanned at any given time and therefore performs as if being watched at all times. Foucault suggested that in contemporary society we behave as if we are under a scrutinizing, panoptic gaze and that we internalize the rules and norms of the society as we imagine ourselves to be always potentially under a watchful eye. See *Gaze*, *Surveillance*.

Parody Cultural productions that make fun of more serious works through humor and satire while maintaining some of their elements such as plot or character. Cultural theorists see parody (as opposed to the creation of new and original works) as one of the key strategies of postmodern style, though it is not exclusive to postmodernism. See *Postmodernism/postmodernity*.

Pastiche A style of plagiarizing, quoting, and borrowing from a mix of previous styles with no reference to history or a sense of rules. In architecture, a pastiche would be a mixing of classical motifs with modern elements in an aesthetic that does not reference the historical meanings of those styles. Pastiche is an aspect of postmodern style. See *Postmodernism/postmodernity*.

Perspective A range of techniques for representing space on a 2D plane to create the illusion of depth or to show the dimensionality of forms. Aerial perspective, widely used in Chinese landscape painting, for example, entails representing objects as more diffuse and less detailed as they recede in space. Orthographic perspective, useful for blueprints and measurement, maps 3D views of objects onto 2D space without offering the illusion that the object is receding in space from a figure situated at a particular standpoint. The linear system of perspective, popularized in Italy in the mid-fifteenth century, is emblematic of the Renaissance interest in the fusion of art and science. The central aspect of linear perspective is the designation of a vanishing point (or points), with all objects receding in size toward that point, creating a sense of deep space out of the flat canvas. The introduction of linear perspective was enormously influential in European realist painting styles, in part because it was understood as a scientific and rational way to represent three dimensions in two-dimensional space. Central to the critique of linear perspective is its designation of the viewer as a single, unmoving spectator. See *Renaissance*.

Phenomenology A philosophy associated with the writings of Edmund Husserl, Edith Stein, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Paul Schiller. Phenomenology emphasizes the importance of the lived body in how we experience and make meaning in the world. Philosophers and visual theorists such as Vivian Sobchack and Elizabeth Grosz have emphasized the specificity of bodily experience and the place of sexuality in embodied experience. Applications of phenomenology to visual media have focused primarily on the specific capacities of each medium that affect the embodied experience of viewers.

Photographic truth The concept, prevalent during the era of analog photography, that photographs tend to be more closely affiliated with truth than, say, drawings or paintings, because the camera is present at the event recorded and acts a mechanical witness, eliminating some of the subjective bias of the human eye and hand. In the era of digital photography, this notion of the photograph as objective truth has become less prevalent. This is in part because digital photographs can be so easily manipulated; appearances, events, and occurrences are easily simulated with tools like Photoshop, and there is broad public familiarity with imaging technologies. Even when produced with analog cameras, photographs are now widely regarded to be the product of human choice, selective composition, and manipulation, no less than other forms of representation. The changing truth-value of photographs is the subject of ongoing debate, especially in photojournalism.

Pixel Short for picture element, a pixel is the smallest unit, or point, in a digital image or on a digital screen. When pixels are visible in a digital image, they appear as squares. The greater the number of pixels per square inch, the higher the resolution of the image or screen. See *Digital*.

Polysemy The quality of having many potential meanings, sometimes all at once. A work of art whose meaning is ambiguous is polysemic because it can have many different meanings to one or different viewers.

Pop art An art movement in the late 1950s and 1960s that used the images and materials of popular or “low” culture for art. Pop artists took aspects of mass

culture, such as color printing processes, television, cartoons, advertisements, and commodities, and reworked them as techniques and icons in paintings. They sometimes used mass media forms such as the screen print to critique the strong association of art with the cultivated taste and aesthetics of high culture conveyed by mediums such as oil paint and to acknowledge the everyday person's culture and taste as relevant and meaningful in a fine art context. Some of Pop art's primary proponents were Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, and Claes Oldenburg.

Positivism A philosophical position that is strongly scientific in inspiration and that assumes that meanings exist out in the world, independent of our feelings, attitudes, or beliefs about them. Positivism assumes that the factual nature of things can be established by experimentation and that facts are free of the influence of language and representational systems. It believes that only scientific knowledge is genuine knowledge and that other ways of viewing the world are suspect. For example, the assumption that photography directly gives us the truth of the world is a positivist assumption.

Postcolonialism A term that refers to the cultural and social contexts of countries that were formerly defined through relationships of colonialism (both colonized and colonizer) and to the contemporary mix of cultures in former colonies, including neocolonialist practices, diasporic migrant cultures, and continuing colonial domination and cultural imperialism toward former colonies. The term *postcolonial* refers to the broad set of changes that have affected both former colonies and colonizers and in particular to the mix of identities, languages, and influences that have resulted from complex systems of dependence and independence. Most theorists of postcolonialism insist that the breakup of older colonial models is never complete and does not put an end to forms of domination between more and less powerful countries. See *Colonialism*.

Postindustrialization Economic contexts and relations that have followed industrialization and that are characterized by the rise of a service economy, information economies, and global capitalism.

Postmodernism/postmodernity Postmodernity is a term used to capture life during a period marked by radical transformation of the social, economic, and political aspects of modernity, marked by the flows of migration and global travel, the flow of information through the Internet and new digital technologies, the dissolution of nation-states in their traditional sovereign form in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the demise of the Cold War, as well as the expansion of trade liberalization, and the increased divide between rich and poor. It describes a set of social, cultural, and economic formations that have occurred "post" or after the height of modernity and that have produced both a different worldview and different ways of being in the world than was the case in modernity. It has been referred to as a period of questioning of "metanarratives" by French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard and of the premise that unified accounts and theories could adequately explain the human condition. It has also been described by Fredric Jameson as a historical period that is the cultural outcome of the "logic of late capitalism."

Postmodernism has been characterized as a critique of modernist concepts such as universalism, the idea of presence, the traditional notion of the subject as unified and self-aware, and faith in progress. Postmodernism is often understood as existing in the detritus of modernity. The concept is also used to describe particular styles in art, literature, architecture, and popular culture that engage in parody, bricolage, appropriation, and ironic reflexivity, as if there is nothing truly new to say, no ultimate knowledge to reveal. In terms of its application to art and visual style, postmodernism is a set of trends in the art world in the late twentieth century that question, among other things, concepts of authenticity, authorship, and the idea of style progression. Postmodern works are thus highly reflexive, with a mix of styles. In popular culture and advertising, the term *postmodern* has been used to describe techniques that involve reflexivity, discontinuity, and pastiche and that speak to viewers as both jaded consumers and through self-knowing metacommunication. See *Discontinuity*, *Hyperreal*, *Metacommunication*, *Modernism*, *Modernity*, *Parody*, *Pastiche*, *Reflexivity*, *Simulation/simulacrum*, *Surface*.

Poststructuralism A loosely used term that refers to a range of theories that followed and criticized structuralism. Poststructuralist theories examine those practices that are left out of a structuralist view of society, for example, desire, play and playfulness, and ambiguities of meaning, especially in the arts. Poststructuralism attempts to provide toolboxes for moving beyond the closed systems of structural logic, models, and methods. Its primary theorists are Roland Barthes (in his later work), Gilles Deleuze, Paul de Man, and Jacques Derrida. See *Structuralism*.

Power/knowledge A term used by Michel Foucault to describe the ways that power affects what counts as knowledge in a given social context and how, in turn, knowledge systems within that society are caught up in power relations. Foucault posited that power and knowledge are inseparable and that concepts of truth are relative to the networks of power and knowledge systems (such as educational systems that award degrees and the designation of expertise) of a given society or episteme.

Practice An important concept in cultural studies that refers to the activities of cultural consumers and producers through which they interact with cultural products and make meaning from them. Thus one can speak of practices of looking as the activities undertaken by viewers of art, the media, and popular culture to interpret and make use of these forms.

Presence The quality of immediate experience that has been traditionally contrasted with representation and with those aspects of the world that are the product of human mediation. The quality of being “present” has thus been understood historically to mean that one can be in the world in a way that is direct and experienced through the senses and unmediated by human belief, ideologies, language systems, or forms of representation. Postmodernism criticizes this concept of presence as the illusion that we can actually experience the world in a direct and complete way without the social baggage of language, ideology, and so forth. See *Postmodernism/postmodernity*.

Propaganda A term with negative connotations that indicates the imparting of political messages through mass media or art with the intent of moving people in calculated ways to enlist them through their emotions in precise political beliefs.

For example, in Nazi Germany the rousing film *Triumph of the Will* was intended to win over the masses for the Nazi cause in its depiction of Hitler as a charismatic leader of a proud, energetic, and beautiful populace.

Prosumer A term introduced in the 2000s when media convergence was underway to describe the individual consumer who has access to the means of media production through personal computers, smartphones, and design software programs. Whereas until the 1990s production equipment and software was largely the domain of the media profession, by the early 2000s media production tools had become easier to use and were widely marketed to consumers as well as professionals.

Pseudoindividuality A term used in Marxist theory, primarily by the Frankfurt School, to describe the way that mass culture creates a false sense of individuality in cultural consumers. Pseudoindividuality refers to the effect of popular culture and advertising that addresses the viewer/consumer specifically as an individual, as in the case of advertising that actually claims that a product will enhance one's individuality, although it is speaking to many people at once. It is "pseudo"individuality if one attains it through mass culture because the message is predicated on the contradiction of many people receiving a message of individuality at the same time, suggesting not individuality but homogeneity. See *Culture industry, Frankfurt School, Marxist theory*.

Psychoanalytic theory A theory of how the mind works, derived originally from Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), that emphasizes the role of the unconscious and desire in shaping a subject's actions, feelings, and motives. Freud's work emphasized bringing the repressed materials of the unconscious to the surface through what was called the talking cure. It focused on the construction of the self through various mechanisms and processes of the unconscious as laid out in Freud's writings and in accounts of his analyses. In its beginnings in the late nineteenth century, psychoanalysis was much maligned in the United States, where ego psychology held sway during Freud's heyday in Europe. Psychoanalytic theory is the application of many of these ideas not as a therapeutic practice but to analyze systems of representation. French theorist Jacques Lacan updated many of Freud's ideas in the 1930s through the 1970s in relationship to language systems and inspired the use of psychoanalytic theory to interpret and analyze literature and film. See *Alienation, Fetish, Gaze, Lack, Mirror phase, Repression, Scopophilia, Unconscious, Voyeurism*.

Public sphere A term that originated with German theorist Jürgen Habermas that defines a social space (which may be virtual) in which citizens come together to debate and discuss the pressing issues of their society. Habermas defined this as an ideal space in which well-informed citizens would discuss matters of common public, not private interests. It is generally understood that Habermas's ideal public sphere has never been realized because of the integration of private interests into public life and because it did not take into account how dynamics of class, race, and gender make access to public space unequal. The term has been used more recently in the plural to refer to the multiple public spheres in which people debate contemporary issues.

Punctum A term used by Roland Barthes to indicate the aspect of a photograph that grabs our emotions or attention and is felt to be uniquely personal by the individual viewer. Barthes wrote that the punctum “triggers” a shock or a prick to the viewer; it is the unintentional detail of the photograph from which we cannot turn away. For Barthes, punctum is distinct from *studium*, the common or banal quality of the image. See *Studium*.

Queer Originally a derogatory term for homosexuals, queer was appropriated as a positive term for sexual identities that do not fit within dominant heterosexual and cis-gender norms. The term *queer* is a good example of appropriation in action in changing a negative term to a positive, even progressive, one. A queer reading of a cultural product or text reads against the grain of dominant sexual ideology to look for unacknowledged representations of nonheterosexual desire. Queer is capitalized when used as a noun to indicate identity. Queer theory is an area of scholarship that critically examines binary assumptions about gender and sexual identity. Initially used to describe gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, the term also encompasses people who identify as transsexual, intersexual, and questioning. One can do a “queer” reading of a text without being queer, and one can identify as queer without pinning down a distinct orientation. See *Appropriation*, *Oppositional reading*, *Transcoding*.

Referent In semiotics, a term that refers to the object itself, as opposed to its representation. Semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure referred to the referent, in the example of a horse, as “what kicks you,” meaning that whereas you could not be kicked in real life by the representation of a horse, you could be by a real horse. In semiotics, some theorists such as Roland Barthes use a two-part model to explain signification (signifier, signified), whereas others, such as Charles Peirce, use a three-part system (sign, interpretant, object), thus making a distinction between the representation (word/image) of an object and the object itself. The term *referent* is helpful in explaining the difference between representation (the re-presentation of real-world objects) and simulation (the copy that has no real equivalent or referent, and that might in fact kick you). See *Interpretant*, *Semiotics*, *Signified*, *Signifier*, *Simulation/simulacrum*.

Reflexivity The practice of making viewers aware of the material and technical means of production by featuring those aspects as the “content” of a cultural production. Reflexivity is both a part of the tradition of modernism, with its emphasis on form and structure, and of postmodernism, with its array of intertextual references and ironic marking of the frame of the image and its status as a cultural product. Reflexivity prevents viewers from being completely absorbed in the illusion of an experience of a film or image, distancing viewers from that experience. See *Modernism*, *Modernity*, *Postmodernism/postmodernity*.

Reification A term from Marxist theory that describes the process by which abstract ideas are rendered concrete. This means, in part, that material objects, such as commodities, are awarded the characteristics of human subjects, whereas the relations between human beings become more objectified. For instance, in an advertisement, a perfume may be given the human attributes of sexiness or femininity and described as “alive” or “vibrant.” Marxist theorists use the term

reification to refer to the alienation that is experienced by workers in their identification with the means and products of production, thus causing them to lose their sense of humanity while at the same time commodities are anthropomorphized. See *Marxist theory*.

Renaissance A term derived from the French word for “rebirth,” first used in the nineteenth century to look back on a particular period of history that began in Italy in the early fourteenth century and reached its height throughout Europe in the early sixteenth century. Characterized by a resurgence of cultural, artistic, and scientific activity and a renewed interest in classical literature and art, the Renaissance is understood as marking a broad transition between medieval time—mischaracterized as a time period with little intellectual or artistic activity—and the modern era. The art of the Renaissance, which flourished in particular in Italy, emphasized both the technique of perspective and a fusion of science and art through such figures as Leonardo da Vinci, Sandro Botticelli, Michelangelo, and Raphael. See *Perspective*.

Replica A copy of an artwork produced by the original artist or under his or her supervision. A replica of a painting, therefore, would be another painting that had been made to be as close to it as possible. Replicas differ from reproductions in that they are composed in the same medium and are not easily reproducible. A replica is thus not an exact copy or reproduction. This artistic tradition became less popular with the rise of techniques of mechanical reproduction, although it is quite common in certain markets for art reproductions, such as the Chinese market. See *Reproduction*.

Representation The act of portraying, depicting, symbolizing, or presenting the likeness of something. Language, the visual arts such as painting and sculpture, and media such as photography, television, and film are systems of representation that function to depict and symbolize aspects of the real world. Representation is often seen as distinct from simulation in that a representation declares itself to be re-presenting some aspect of the real, whereas a simulation has no necessary referent in the real. See *Mimesis*, *Simulation/simulacrum*, *Social construction*.

Repression A term in psychoanalytic theory that refers to the process by which the individual relegates to and keeps within the unconscious those particular thoughts, feelings, memories, or desires that are too difficult or socially inappropriate to deal with. Freud postulated that we repress that which produces fear, anxiety, shame, or other negative emotions within us and that this repression is active and ongoing. He felt that it was only through this repression that we become functioning and normative members of a society. The “talking cure” of psychoanalysis is intended to help release that which is repressed in the neurotic person. Michel Foucault offered another approach, in which he argued against the idea that these desires are hidden and go unexpressed in everyday life. Foucault wrote that systems of control are indirectly productive rather than fully repressive. By this, he meant that social structures encourage such desires to be expressed, spoken, and rendered visible in indirect ways, thereby allowing them to be named, known, and regulated. For example, in a Foucaultian approach, talk shows in which people confess their bad behavior and secret wishes would be

seen as a context in which desires can be witnessed, cataloged, and controlled. See *Power/knowledge*, *Psychoanalytic theory*, *Unconscious*.

Reproduction The act of making a copy or duplicating something. Reproduction of images refers to the means through which original works are rendered into multiple copies in the form of prints, posters, postcards, and other merchandise. German theorist Walter Benjamin wrote a famous essay in 1936 on the impact of “mechanical reproducibility” of art images. Benjamin emphasized the importance of the role of the copy in changing the meaning of the original image (in his case, a painting). See *Replica*.

Resistance In the context of popular culture, the term *resistance* refers to the techniques used by viewers-consumers to not participate in or to stand in opposition to the messages of dominant culture. Bricolage, or the strategies by which consumers transform the meanings of commodities from their intended meaning, is an example of a resistant consumer practice. See *Appropriation*, *Bricolage*, *Oppositional reading*, *Tactic*, *Textual poaching*.

Scientific revolution The time period covering the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries characterized by scientific development and a struggle for power between the Church and science. This era includes the Renaissance, the great navigations of European countries to the New World, the Protestant Reformation, and the emergence of Spain as the first great world power. It was a time period of scientific discovery in astronomy (with Copernicus and Galileo), the development of perspective in art, the development of experimental method by Francis Bacon in the seventeenth century, the philosophy and mathematics of René Descartes, and the discovery of gravity by Isaac Newton. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, science had emerged as an unquestioned pursuit of human endeavor, with a separation of the moral world of the Church and the goals of science. See *Renaissance*.

Scopophilia In psychoanalytic terms, the drive to look and the general pleasure in looking. Freud saw voyeurism (the pleasure in looking without being seen) and exhibitionism (the pleasure in being looked at) as the active and passive forms of scopophilia. The concept of scopophilia has been important to psychoanalytic film theory in its emphasis on the relationship of pleasure and desire to the practice of looking. See *Psychoanalytic theory*, *Voyeurism*.

Semiotics A theory of signs, sometimes called semiology, concerned with the ways in which things (words, images, and objects) are vehicles for meaning. Semiotics is a tool for analyzing the signs of a particular culture and how meaning is produced within a particular cultural context. Just as languages communicate through words organized into sentences, other practices in a culture are treated by semiotic theory as languages made up of basic elements and the rules for combining them. The two originators of semiotics are the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure at the beginning of the twentieth century and the American philosopher Charles Peirce in the nineteenth century. Contemporary applications of semiotics follow from the work of French theorists Roland Barthes and Christian Metz and Italian theorist Umberto Eco in the 1960s. Their work provides important tools for understanding cultural products (images, film, television,

clothing, etc.) as signs that can be decoded. Roland Barthes used a system of signifier (word/ image/object) and signified (meaning) as the two elements of a sign. Charles Peirce used the term *interpretant* to designate the meaning that a sign produces in the mind of the person. Peirce also divided signs into several categories, including indexical, iconic, and symbolic signs. Semiotics is central to understanding culture as a signifying practice that is the work of creating and interpreting meaning on a daily basis in a given culture. See *Code, Iconic sign, Indexical sign, Interpretant, Myth, Referent, Sign, Signified, Signifier, Symbolic sign*.

Sign A semiotic term that describes the relationship between a vehicle of meaning, such as a word, image, or object, and its specific meaning in a particular context. In technical terms, this means the bringing together of signifier (word/image/object) and signified (mental concept of the referent) to make a sign (meaning). It is important in semiotics to note that signifiers have different meanings in different contexts. For example, in a classical Hollywood film, a cigarette might signify friendship or romance, but in an anti-smoking ad it would signify disease and death. See *Semiotics, Signified, Signifier*.

Signified In semiotic terms, the meaning that together with the signifier (object/image/word) makes the sign. For instance, the signified of a smiley face is happiness, which in combination with the image of a smiley face constitutes the sign smile equals happiness. See *Semiotics, Sign, Signifier*.

Signifier In semiotic terms, the word, image, or object within a sign that conveys meaning. For example, in an advertisement for sports shoes, an inner-city basketball court is a signifier of authenticity, skill, and coolness. The relationship of a signifier and a signified together forms a sign. Semiotic theory often refers to a free-floating signifier, by which it means a signifier whose sense is not fixed and that can vary a great deal from context to context. See *Semiotics, Sign, Signified*.

Simulation/simulacrum Terms most famously used by French theorist Jean Baudrillard that refer to a sign that does not clearly have a real-life counterpart, referent, or precedent. A simulacrum is not necessarily a representation of something else, and it may actually precede the thing it simulates in the real world. Baudrillard stated that to simulate a disease was to acquire its symptoms, thus making it difficult to distinguish between the simulation and the actual disease. For example, a casino or amusement park simulacrum of the city of Paris can be seen as a substitute for the actual city and can perhaps for some viewers seem to offer a more compelling experience of Paris than the city itself, which may be totally out of reach for the viewer. See *Postmodernism/postmodernity, Representation*.

Social construction A theory that gained primacy in the 1980s in a number of fields that, at its most general level, asserts that much of what has been taken as fact is socially constructed through conjunctures of ideological forces, language, economic relationships, and so forth. This approach understands the meaning of things to be relative to context and historical moment and to derive from how things are constructed through systems of representation, such as images and language, rather than understanding meanings to be inherent in things, separate from human interpretation. Thus, we can make meaning of the world around us

only through systems of representation, and they, in effect, help to construct our experience of the material world for us. For example, in science studies, social constructionists examine the social factors (class, gender, ideology, work practice) that influence knowledge and the facts in laboratory experimentation.

Social media Digital and computer-based devices and programs that generate, support, and build interactivity among people in complex social networks around beliefs, practices, causes, and interests as diverse as politics, religion, family life, sports, style, and tastes and preferences in consumer goods.

Social network A concept used to describe groups connected by networks of affiliation, which may be organized around anything from professional interests, political affiliation, and religion to sports, taste, and consumption. The Internet is widely regarded as an infrastructure that supports the growth of complex social networks. See *Internet*.

Spectacle A term that generally refers to something that is striking or impressive in its visual display, if not awe-inspiring. The term *spectacle* was used by French theorist Guy Debord in his book *Society of the Spectacle* to describe how representations dominate contemporary culture and how all social relations are mediated by and through images.

Spectator A term derived from psychoanalytic film theory that refers to the viewer of visual arts such as cinema. In early versions of this theory, the term *spectator* did not refer to a specific individual or an actual member of the viewing audience but rather was imagined to be an ideal viewer, separate from all defining social, sexual, and racial aspects of viewer identity.

In contrast, film theory in the late 1980s and 1990s emphasized specific identity groups of spectators, such as female spectators, working-class spectators, queer spectators, or black spectators. This work shifted away from the abstraction of the category to include more specific aspects of identity and processes such as identification and pleasure that are shaped by specific embodied experience. In addition, film theory has increasingly emphasized how one need not occupy an identity group to identify within that group's spectator position. For example, in action films, one does not have to be male to take up in fantasy the position of the male spectator. See *Gaze*, *Identification*, *Psychoanalytic theory*.

Strategy A term used by French theorist Michel de Certeau to describe the practices by which dominant institutions seek to structure time, place, and actions of their social subjects. This is in contrast to the tactics by which those subjects seek to reclaim a space and time for themselves. For example, the television programming schedule is a strategy to make viewers watch programming in a particular order, whereas an individual's use of a remote control or a TiVo is a tactic to decide viewing in their own way. See *Tactic*.

Structuralism A set of theories that came into prominence in the 1960s that emphasized the laws, codes, rules, formulas, and conventions that structure human behavior and systems of meaning. It is based on the premise that cultural activity could be analyzed objectively as a science; structuralists emphasize elements within a culture that created a unitary organization that could be understood through theory and interpreted through a closed method. This often takes the

form of defining the binary oppositions that structure ways of viewing the world and cultural products as well. Structuralism is considered to have originated with the structural linguistics of Swiss theorist Ferdinand de Saussure in the early twentieth century and in the mid-1950s through the work of Russian linguist Roman Jakobson. It was explored in influential ways by French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, who applied it to studying various cultures. In popular culture, structuralism has been used to identify the recurrent patterns and formulas in genres of film or literature. For example, Italian theorist Umberto Eco wrote a well-known structuralist analysis of the James Bond spy thriller novels of Ian Fleming, in which he argues that no matter how much the details change from story to story, the structure remains the same. Much of the theory that followed structuralism, which is often called poststructuralism, criticized structuralism for emphasizing structure at the expense of other elements that do not fit into these formulas or conventions. See *Binary oppositions*, *Genre*, *Poststructuralism*.

Structures of feeling A term used by Raymond Williams to describe the intangibles of an era that explain the quality of life and distinct sense of style. According to Williams, in any given time and context, structures of feeling emerge, often through the arts, that define the tone of a particular time.

Studium From Roland Barthes, a term that means the common banal meaning of the photographic image. This is distinct from the punctum, which grabs our emotions and is particular to individual viewers. See *Punctum*.

Subculture Distinct social groups within wider cultural formations that define themselves in opposition to mainstream culture. The term *subculture* has been used extensively in cultural studies to designate those social groups, usually youth groups, who use style to signify resistance to dominant culture. Subcultures, which might include punk rockers, followers of rave, or subgroups of hip-hop, use style in fashion, music, and lifestyle as signifying practices to convey resistance to norms. Bricolage, or the use of commodities in ways that change their meaning (such as wearing jackets backwards or extra-large pants slung low), is a central practice of subcultures. Since the 2000s, subcultures have proliferated, but not always or necessarily in opposition to a central or dominant culture. Rather, we have seen the proliferation of distinct and varied subcultures. See *Bricolage*.

Subject A term, used in philosophy and psychoanalytic and cultural theory, that refers to the available ways of being for humans in a given time period or context. Historically, the subject is a concept that has shifted away from the notion of the unitary, autonomous self of liberal philosophy and the thinking, rational self that sits at the center of Cartesian philosophy. Rather, today we understand the subject to be more fragmented, less self-knowing, and understanding itself to be constituted through processes of splitting. To speak of individuals as subjects is to indicate that they are split between the conscious and unconscious, that they are produced as subjects not by being born alone and independent but through the structures of language and society, and that they are both active forces (subjects of history) and dependent on others and acted on by (subjected to) all the social forces of their moment in time. See *Psychoanalytic theory*.

Subjective Something that is particular to the view of an individual, hence the opposite of objective. A subjective view is understood to be personal, specific, and imbued with the values and beliefs of a particular person, experienced through the body and the senses and not through the abstraction of rational, disembodied thought. See *Objective*.

Subject position A term used to describe the ways that images, whether as films, paintings, or other forms, designate a position for their intended spectators. For instance, it can be said that films offer to their viewers a particular subject position. There is an ideal spectator of the action film, regardless of how any particular viewer might make personal meaning of the film, and the subject position of a traditional landscape painting is that of a spectator who luxuriates in the fantasy of ownership of sublime and bountiful nature. As theorized by Michel Foucault, subject position is the place that a particular discourse asks a human subject to adopt within it. For example, the discourse of education offers a limited set of subject positions that individuals can occupy, in which some are authoritative figures of knowledge, such as teachers, and others are relegated the position of students, or recipients of that knowledge. See *Discourse, Interpellation*.

Sublime A term in aesthetic theory, specifically in the work of eighteenth-century theorist Edmund Burke, that sets out to evoke experiences so momentous that they inspire intense veneration in the viewer or listener. The history of traditional landscape painting, for instance, was about imaging the sublime in that it intended to create in viewers a deep awe of the limitless splendors of nature.

Surface The idea in postmodernism that objects have no depth or profound meaning but instead exist only at the level of surface. This is in contrast to the idea in modernism that the real meaning of something is below the surface and can be found through acts of interpretation. See *Postmodernism/postmodernity*.

Surrealism An artistic movement of the early twentieth century that extended around the world and was expressed through literature, theater, and the visual arts, surrealism focused on the role of the unconscious in representation and in dismantling the opposition between the real and the imaginary. The surrealists were interested in unlocking the unconscious and working against logical and rational processes of making meaning. Their ideas were later associated with Freudian psychoanalysis, but Freud and the surrealists were not really in conversation. Surrealist practices included automatic writing and painting and the use of dreams to inspire writing and art-making. Freud suggested that the surrealists did not really represent the workings of the unconscious but rather brought unconscious feelings to the level of literal expression. The movement's primary proponents were André Breton, Salvador Dalí, Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst, and René Magritte. Surrealism continued into the late twentieth century as an artistic movement in some countries, including the former Czechoslovakia and the current Czech Republic, where some of its proponents have included the animator Jan Svankmajer and the late painter and ceramicist Eva Svankmajerová.

Surveillance The act of keeping watch over a person or place. Camera technologies such as photography, video, and film have been used for surveillance purposes. For French philosopher Michel Foucault, surveillance is one of the primary

means through which a society enacts control over its subjects through its encouragement of self-regulation. See *Panopticism*.

Symbolic sign A term in semiotics used by Charles Peirce to indicate those signs in which there is no connection between the signifier (word/image) and the thing signified except that imposed by convention. Language systems are primarily symbolic systems. Peirce distinguished iconic, indexical, and symbolic signs. For example, the word *university* does not physically resemble any actual university (in other words, it is not iconic), nor does it have a physical connection to the university (so it is not indexical), hence it is a symbolic sign. See *Iconic sign*, *Indexical sign*, *Semiotics*.

Tactic A term used by French theorist Michel de Certeau to indicate those practices deployed by people who are not in positions of power to gain some control over the spaces of their daily lives. De Certeau defined tactics as the acts of the weak that do not have lasting effect. He contrasted this with the strategies of institutions. For example, sending a personal email while at work might be a tactic to give oneself a small feeling of empowerment in the alienation of one's workplace, whereas a company's monitoring of employee email usage is a strategy. See *Strategy*.

Taste In cultural theory, taste refers to the shared artistic and cultural values of a particular social community or individual. However, even when it seems most individually specific, taste is informed by experiences relating to one's class, cultural background, education, and other aspects of identity. Notions of good taste usually refer to middle-class or upper-class notions of what is tasteful, and bad taste is a term often associated with mass or low culture. Taste, in this understanding, is something that can be learned through contact with cultural institutions. See *Connoisseur*.

Technological determinism A position that sees technology as the most important determining factor in social change, positing technology as somehow separate from social and cultural influence. In this view of technology, people are merely observers and facilitators of technology's progress. Technological determinism has been largely discredited in favor of the view that technological change and advance is the result of social, economic, and cultural influences and cannot be seen as either autonomous or outside those influences.

Television flow A term used by cultural theorist Raymond Williams to describe the way that television incorporates interruption, such as television commercials and the break between programs, into a seemingly continuous flow so that everything on the TV screen is seen as part of one single entertainment experience. Williams coined this term in the mid-1970s in an earlier era dominated by network television, and he was influenced in his experience by looking at the commercial interruptions in U.S. network television.

Text A term extended by French theorist Roland Barthes to include visual media such as photography, film, television, or painting to suggest that they are constructed on the basis of codes in the same way that written language is organized to make a coherent, thematically and formally unified work or text. Insofar as they are constructions, texts can be broken down into their component parts through

the work of analysis. Barthes in particular distinguished texts from works, such as artworks, to indicate an active relationship between the writer and reader or artist/producer and viewer in the former term. This is because the constructed nature of the text implies that its meaning is produced in a contextual relationship rather than simply residing in the work itself. To treat an artwork as a text means that we read it through codes that we recognize as such rather than passively absorb or stand in awe of the work without noting the means of its construction.

Textual poaching A term used by French theorist Michel de Certeau to describe the ways that viewers can read and interpret cultural texts, such as film or television, to rework those texts in some way. This might involve rethinking the story of a particular film or, in the case of some fan cultures, writing one's own version of it. Textual poaching was defined by de Certeau as a process analogous to "inhabiting a text like a rented apartment." In other words, viewers of popular culture can "inhabit" that text by renegotiating its meaning or by creating new cultural products in response to it.

Transcoding The practice of taking terms and meanings and appropriating them to create new meanings. For example, in the 1990s the gay and lesbian and Queer Nation movements reappropriated the term *queer*, which had been used as a derogatory term for homosexuals, to give it a new meaning, both as a positive term for identity and as a theoretical term indicating a position through which the norm is questioned, or "queered." See *Queer*.

Unconscious A central concept in psychoanalytic theory that indicates the phenomena that are not within consciousness at any given moment. According to Sigmund Freud, the unconscious is a repository for desires, fantasies, and fears that act on and motivate us though we are not aware of them. Freud's idea of the unconscious was a radical departure from the traditional idea of the subject that could easily know the reasons for his or her actions. Because the unconscious and the conscious sides of a human being do not work in concert, psychoanalytic theory speaks of the human as a divided or split subject. Dreams and so-called Freudian slips of the tongue are evidence of the unconscious. The term *subconscious* was rejected because it suggests it sits below consciousness, when in fact the two levels are equally active, interconstitutive, and not hierarchical. See *Psychoanalytic theory*, *Repression*.

Use value The practical function originally assigned to a commodity; in other words, what it does. This stands in contrast to its exchange value, which is what is paid for it. Marxist theory critiques the emphasis in capitalism on exchange over use value. For example, a luxury car and a less expensive compact car have the same use value of being means of transportation, but the luxury car has a much higher exchange value. See *Capitalism*, *Commodity/commodification*, *Commodity fetishism*, *Exchange value*, *Marxist theory*.

Virtual Because electronic technology can simulate realities, the term *virtual* has come to indicate phenomena that exist though in no tangible or physical way. A virtual version of something is capable of functioning in a number of ways that simulate the experience of its actual physical or material counterpart. For example, in *virtual reality*, users wear gear that allows them the sensations of

a particular reality, and they can respond as if they were in that physical space. Airline pilots use virtual reality systems to train on the ground as if they were flying through actual space. Virtual images have no referent in the real but can be both analog and digital. The term *virtual space* has been used broadly to refer to those spaces that are electronically constituted, such as space defined by the Internet, the web, email, or simulated worlds online, but that do not necessarily conform to the laws of physical, material, or Cartesian space. Many aspects of virtual space encourage us to think of these spaces as being similar to the physical spaces that we encounter in the real world (when virtual spaces are referred to as “rooms,” for instance); however, virtual space does not obey the rules of physical space. See *Analog*, *Cartesian space*, *Digital*, *Web*.

Virtual reality See *Virtual*.

Visuality The condition of everyday life in which social context, interaction, and power are enacted through the visual. Whereas vision is defined as the physical act of seeing, visuality refers to sight as a “social fact,” according to art historian Hal Foster. Visuality includes not only social codes about what can be seen and who is able and permitted to look, but also the construction of built environments in relation to these looking practices. Visuality is thus a term that calls our attention to how power is enacted in distributed and complex ways through sensory means that include touch, smell, and sound but which often privilege sight.

Voyeurism In psychoanalytic terms, the erotic pleasure in watching without being seen. Voyeurism has historically been associated with the masculine spectator. Voyeurism is also used to describe the experience of cinematic spectators who in the traditional viewing context of the movie theater can view the images on screen while themselves being hidden in darkness. See *Psychoanalytic theory*, *Scopophilia*.

Web Originally known as the World Wide Web, a system of interlinked hypertext documents accessed through the Internet with a system introduced to the public in 1989. Developed by Tim Berners-Lee at CERN in Switzerland, the web is the central communication and information-sharing system for those who use the infrastructure of the Internet. But it is only one of the ways that things circulate on the Internet. Web 2.0 refers to the second generation of web design in which social networking emerged in the early 2000s. See *Hypertext*, *Internet*, *Social network*.

- Fig. 1.1 Bahraini protesters carry symbolic coffins with pictures of victims of the government crackdown on opposition protests in the Shiite village of Barbar, May 4, 2012. Photo: AFP/Getty Images.
- Fig. 1.2 Ken Gonzales-Day, *Nightfall I*, 2007–12. LightJet print on aluminum, 36 × 46". © Ken Gonzales-Day. Courtesy Luis de Jesus Gallery, Los Angeles.
- Fig. 1.3 Lego MRI suite model built by Ian Moore for the Royal Berkshire hospital in Reading, UK. Photo © RBFT. Courtesy of the Royal Berkshire Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.
- Fig. 1.1 Weegee (Arthur Fellig), *The First Murder*, 1941. Gelatin silver print. Photo by Weegee (Arthur Fellig) International Center of Photography/Getty Images.
- Fig. 1.2 Unidentified Photographer. Weegee (Arthur Fellig) typing in the trunk of his 1938 Chevy, 1942. Courtesy International Center of Photography/Getty Images.
- Fig. 1.3 Body of Emmett Till in glass-sealed casket on view to 50,000 mourners at the Roberts Temple Church of God, Chicago, September 1955. Photo courtesy *Chicago Sun-Times*.
- Fig. 1.4 Eliot Ward, mobile phone image of Adam Stacey taken on Tube train during the July 7, 2005, London bombings. Photo courtesy Adam Stacey/GAMMA.
- Fig. 1.6 Allan Sørensen, Middle East correspondent at *Berlingske* newspaper, Denmark, mobile phone photograph of people watching bombing of Gaza from hilltop, posted to Twitter on July 9, 2014, with line "Sderot Cinema." Photo: Allan Sørensen.
- Fig. 1.7 Henri-Horace Roland de la Porte, *Still Life*, c. 1765. Oil on canvas. Courtesy Norton Simon Art Foundation, Pasadena, CA.
- Fig. 1.8 René Magritte, *Les Deux Mystères (The Two Mysteries)*, 1966. Oil on canvas. 65 × 80 cm. Photo © Photothèque R. Magritte-ADAGP/Art Resource, New York. Painting © 2016 C. Herscovici/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.
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- Fig. 1.11 Saks Afridi, Ali Rez, Akash Goel, Insiya Syed, JR, Assam Khalid, Jamil Akhtar, and Noor Behram, #NotABugSplat, 2014. Courtesy Saks Afridi.
- Fig. 1.12 Timothy O'Sullivan, *Gettysburg, Pa. Dead Confederate Soldier in the Devil's Den*, July 1863. Print from glass, wet collodion negative. Titled *The Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter, Gettysburg* in Alexander Gardner, *Photographic Sketch Book of the War, 1865-6*, Plate 41. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. Reproduction number: LC-B8171-7942.
- Fig. 1.13 Photograph from *Oh God, Zilla*, Zilla van den Born, 2014. Courtesy Caters News Agency.
- Fig. 1.14 Robert Frank, *Trolley—New Orleans*, 1955. Gelatin silver print. © Robert Frank, from *The Americans*. Courtesy of Pace/McGill Gallery.
- Fig. 1.15 *Paris Match*, no. 326, June 25–July 2, 1955. Photo: Izis (aka Israël Biedermanas). *Paris Match*/Getty Images.
- Fig. 1.16 Yue Minjun, *Butterfly*, 2007, oil on canvas, 100 × 80 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Max Protetch Gallery, NY
- Fig. 1.17 Smiling Buddha on rocks with a sack and rosary. Eighteenth-century Qing Dynasty porcelain figure. DEA/Collection Alfredo Dagli Orti. Photo: DeAgostini/Getty Images
- Fig. 1.18 World Wildlife Fund ad, TBWA Paris, 2008. Courtesy TBWA Paris.
- Fig. 1.19 Anti-smoking ad for the California Health Department, Asher and Partners, 1997. Campaign by Asher & Partners, Los Angeles, 1997. Courtesy of California Department of Health.
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- Fig. 1.21 Screen shot from *Burka Avenger*, the Urdu language television series launched in 2013. Unicorn Black, Pakistan, animated by Aaron Haroon Rashid.
- Fig. 1.22 Matthew Brady, carte de visite photograph of U.S. Calvary Major General George Armstrong Custer, 1864. Brady National Photographic Art Gallery, Washington, DC. Black-and-white negative (LC-MSS-44297-33-179). Image courtesy James Wadsworth Family Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C.
- Fig. 1.24 A man holds Catalan identification card during a rally calling for the independence of Catalonia, Barcelona, Spain, September 11, 2015. Photo: Francisco Seco/AP.

- Fig. 1.25 Polar bear on ice floe, 2005. Photo: Jean-Louis Klein and Marie-Luce Hubert/Science Source.
- Fig. 1.26 Police arrest a climate change protester dressed in a polar bear costume, New York City, 2014. Photo: Michael Appelton.
- Fig. 1.27 Jeff Widener, *Tank Man* (aka *Unknown Protester*), Tiananmen Square, Beijing, China, 1989. Photo: Jeff Widener/AP.
- Fig. 1.28 San Francisco protest against decision to hold Olympics in Beijing, April 9, 2008. Photo: Reagan Louie.
- Fig. 1.30 Raphael, *The Small Cowper Madonna*, c. 1505. Oil on wood panel, 59.5 × 44 cm. Image courtesy of the Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
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- Fig. 1.32 Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Mother*, Nipomo, California, 1936. Gelatin silver print. 12 1/2 × 9 7/8." Library of Congress FSA/OWI Collection.
- Fig. 1.33 Florence Thompson, the "Migrant Mother" in Dorothea Lange's 1936 photo, interviewed on October 10, 1978. Photo: Ted Benson/Modesto Bee/ZUMAPRESS.com.
- Fig. 2.2 Ronda Rousey, UFC Women's Bantamweight Champion, takes selfies with fans during the UFC 193 media event at Etihad Stadium, September 16, 2015, in Melbourne, Australia. Photo: Michael Dodge/Zuffa LLC/Zuffa LLC via Getty Images.
- Fig. 2.3 Screen shot from digital film *Good Stock on the Dimension Floor: An Opera*, HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN?, 2014. Courtesy of Sienna Shields.
- Fig. 2.5 Chinese communist ceramic figures for sale, 2012. Photo: Jeremy Sutton/Alamy.
- Fig. 2.6 Vladimir Tretchikoff, *The Chinese Girl* (aka *The Green Lady*), 1952. Oil on canvas. Private Collection / Bridgeman Images. Reproduced with permission of The Tretchikoff Foundation.
- Fig. 2.7 Shepard Fairey, Obey Giant logo. Courtesy of Shepard Fairey/obey-giant.com.
- Fig. 2.8 David Teniers the Younger, *Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in His Picture Gallery in Brussels*, c. 1650–51. Oil on copper, 106 × 129 cm. Museo del Prado, Madrid/Art Resource, NY.
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- Fig. 2.10 Crowds viewing the *Mona Lisa* in the Louvre. Photo: Alfonso de Tomas/Shutterstock.
- Fig. 2.11 The Art-Culture System, by James Clifford. © James Clifford, from James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century*.

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- Fig. 2.14 Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1964 replica of 1917 readymade. Porcelain urinal. Photo: Tate London/Art Resource, NY.
- Fig. 2.15 Fred Wilson, slave shackles displayed next to fine silver in *Mining the Museum: An Installation by Fred Wilson*, 1992—1993. The Maryland Historical Society and The Contemporary, Baltimore. © Fred Wilson, Courtesy Pace Gallery, New York.
- Fig. 2.16 Fred Wilson, *Guarded View*, 1991. Installation view, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. © Fred Wilson, Courtesy Pace Gallery, New York.
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- Fig. 2.20 Gordon Parks, *American Gothic, Washington, D.C.*, 1942. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Farm Security Administration, Office of War Information Photograph Collection (digital ID: ppmsc 00237).
- Fig. 2.21 Gran Fury, *Read My Lips (girls)*, 1988. Lithograph poster. Poster in the Gran Fury Collection, New York Public Library. Courtesy ACT UP.
- Fig. 2.22 *iRaq*. Poster by Copper Greene, 2004.
- Fig. 3.1 Ancient statue dressed in a peplos in front of a 1930s diesel engine in the Centrale Montemartini Museum, Rome, 2007. © Roma, Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali, Musei Capitolini.
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- Fig. 3.6 Chrysler radiator cap, c. 1930. Photo: Michelle Enfield/Alamy Stock Photo.

- Fig. 3.7 Oscar Graubner, *Margaret Bourke-White atop the Chrysler Building*, between 1931 and 1934. Gelatin silver print. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division (LC-DIG-ppmsca-19361).
- Fig. 3.11 and 3.12a-c Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas (The Maids of Honor)*, 1656. Oil on canvas. Museo del Prado, Madrid. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.
- Fig. 3.13 Tourists taking selfie at Acropolis, Athens, May 27, 2014. Photo: Leisa Tyler/Lightrocket via Getty Images.
- Fig. 3.14 Jeremy Bentham's panopticon penitentiary design, drawn by Willey Reveley, 1791. From *The Works of Jeremy Bentham, Vol. IV*, John Bowring edition of 1838-42, reprinted by Russell and Russell, Inc., New York, 1962.
- Fig. 3.15 Inside a prison building at Presidio Modelo, Isla de la Juventud, Cuba, 2005. Photo: Friman. Source: Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CC-BY-SA 3.0.
- Fig. 3.17 A New York City Police Department mobile observation tower, Times Square, May 5, 2010. Timothy A. Clary/AFP/Getty Images.
- Fig. 3.20 Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Bath*, c. 1880–85. Oil on canvas. 29 × 23½". Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Museum purchase, Mildred Anna Williams Collection.
- Fig. 3.22 Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *La Grande Odalisque*, 1814. Oil on canvas. 88.9 × 162.56 cm (35 × 64"). Louvre, Paris.
- Fig. 3.25 Steve McCurry, *Afghan Girl*, 1984. Photo: Steve McCurry/Magnum Photos.
- Fig. 3.26 Graffiti on *Homeland* set by The Arabian Street Artists (Heba Amin @hebamin, Caram Kapp @dot_seekay, Don Karl aka Stone @Donrok). (A) There is no Homeland (mafeesh Homeland); (B) #blacklivesmatter. Photos: Don Karl.
- Fig. 3.27 Guerrilla Girls, *Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?*, 2005. Poster. © The Guerrilla Girls. Courtesy of the artists.
- Fig. 3.29 Lorraine O'Grady, *Untitled (A skeptic inspects Mlle Bourgeoise Noire's cape)*, 1980–83/2009. Silver gelatin fiber print. 40 × 60". © 2016 Lorraine O'Grady/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York.
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- Fig. 3.36 Catherine Opie, *Jerome Caja*, 1993. Chromogenic print, edition of 10, 20 × 16". © Catherine Opie, Courtesy of Regen Projects, Los Angeles

- Fig. 3.37 Hans Holbein, *Portrait of Sir Thomas More*, 1527. Oil on oak board. 29½ × 23¾". Frick Collection, New York
- Fig. 3.38 Kara Walker, *A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby*, 2014. Exhibition view. Photo: Robert Nickelsberg/Getty Images.
- Fig. 4.1 Painted terracotta funerary figures from the mausoleum of the first Qin emperor, Qin dynasty, c. 221–206 BCE. From the Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum, Shaanxi, China. Photo: Neale Cousland/Shutterstock.
- Fig. 4.2 Fish and loaves fresco, Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Catacombs of San Callisto, Rome, Italy, after 150 CE. Bridgeman Images.
- Fig. 4.3 Naum Gabo, *Kinetic Construction (Standing Wave)*, 1919–20. Replica 1985. Metal, wood, electric motor. 616 × 241 × 190 mm. © Nina and Graham Williams/Tate London 2014.
- Fig. 4.5 Serafima Ryangina, *Higher and Higher*, 1934. Paint on canvas. Kiev Museum of Russian Art, Kiev, Ukraine.
- Fig. 4.6 Works by Dezider Tóth on display in Depozit, an unofficial exhibition space for nonconformist art in Tóth's apartment at 1 Moscow Street, Bratislava, Slovakia, ca. 1976–77. Photo: Dezider Tóth, with permission. Courtesy Ján Kralovic.
- Fig. 4.7 Evgeny Ruhkin, *Composition with Icon*, 1972. Paint on canvas. 98 × 99 cm. Collection of ART4.RU, Contemporary Art Museum, Moscow.
- Fig. 4.11 Sandro Botticelli, *The Cestello Annunciation*, 1489–90. Tempera on wood panel. 62½ × 59". Uffizi Gallery, Florence.
- Fig. 4.12 Simone Martini and Lippo Memmi, *The Annunciation*, 1333. Tempera and gold on panel. 72½ × 82⅝". Uffizi Gallery, Florence.
- Fig. 4.13 Andrea Mantegna, *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, c. 1480. Tempera on canvas. 27 × 32". Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan.
- Fig. 4.14 Albrecht Dürer, *Draftsman Drawing a Nude*, illustration from *The Painter's Manual*, 1525. Photographic Collection, Warburg Institute, University of London.
- Fig. 4.15 Albrecht Dürer, *Adam and Eve*, 1507. Oil on two panels, each 209 × 81 cm. Museo del Prado, Madrid/Bridgeman Images.
- Fig. 4.16 Salvador Dalí, *Slave Market with the Disappearing Bust of Voltaire*, 1940. Oil on canvas. 18¼ × 25⅞". Collection of the Salvador Dali Museum, St. Petersburg, Florida.
- Fig. 4.18 Johannes Vermeer, *Lady at the Virginals with a Gentleman (The Music Lesson)*, 1662–65. Oil on canvas. 28 3/4 × 25 1/5". Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, 2016.
- Fig. 4.19 Claude Monet, *La Gare Saint-Lazare*, 1877. Oil on canvas. Photo: Hervé Lewandowski. © Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Grand Palais (Musée d'Orsay).
- Fig. 4.20 Claude Monet, *Arrival of the Normandy Train, Gare Saint-Lazare*, 1877. Oil on canvas. 59.6 × 80.2 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago Mr. and Mrs. Martin A. Ryerson Collection, Bridgeman Images.

- Fig. 4.21 Georges Braque, *Woman with a Guitar*, 1913. Oil on canvas. 130 × 73 cm. © 2016 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. Photo: Jacques Faujour. CNAC/MNAM/Dist, Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, New York.
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- Fig. 4.23 Carved wood mask used by the Fang, a male secret society that sought out sorcerers in Gabon villages, during the nineteenth century. From the collection of a French stockbroker, deposited with the Louvre. Photograph: Marie-Lan Nguyen, 2006.
- Fig. 4.24 Giorgio de Chirico, *Melancholy and Mystery of a Street*, 1914. Oil on canvas. 27 1/5 × 33 1/2". © 2016 Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York/SIAE, Rome.
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- Fig. 4.34 Jon Haddock, *Wang Weilen - Screenshot Series*, 2000. Edition of 3. Chromogenic print from digital file created in Photoshop. 22.5 1/2 × 30". Courtesy John Haddock/whitelead.com.
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- Fig. 5.9 Louis Daguerre, *View of the Boulevard du Temple*, 3rd arrondissement, Paris, 1838. Photograph made from a daguerreotype in 1937. Universal History Archive/UiG/Bridgeman Images.
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- Fig. 6.3 1947 ad for Max Factor Hollywood patented Pan-Cake Make-Up. *The Advertising Age*/Alamy.
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- Fig. 6.6 @NeinQuarterly Theodor Adorno Twitter avatar. Graphic by Luc(as) de Groot, courtesy Eric Jarosinski/Nein.Quarterly.

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